Lilith

THE INDEPENDENT JEWISH WOMEN'S MAGAZINE

Why Betty Boop Is Jewish

A Feminist Fracas Over Prayer
(It's Not What You Think)

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Lilith

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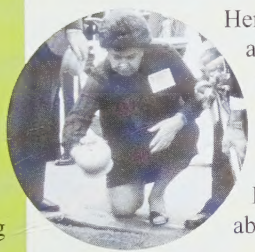

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Why is this magazine called LILITH?

In the Garden of Eden, long before the eating of the apple, the Holy One created the first human beings—a man, Adam, and a woman, Lilith. Lilith said "We are equal because we are created from the same earth."

—from *The Alphabet of Ben Sira*, 23a-b

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From the Editor

Did you ever see the movie "The Group," made from Mary McCarthy's novel? It draws the curtain back to reveal sexuality and the sexual double standard in the lives of smart, savvy women who were students at an elite women's college in the 1930s. A few weeks ago I went to a screening of "The Wild Party" from director Dorothy Arzner, the first talkie starring Clara Bow. It features a group of smart, savvy women who were students at an elite women's college in the 1920s. Both films are provocative, charming, and very unsettling in their portrayal of women's struggles for legitimacy, though they also feel dated. Ditto this season's "Mona Lisa Smile." So why am I horrified by the fact that women in their 20s and 30s today see as equally dated the struggles with sexuality and a sexual double-standard in the lives of women I knew when I myself was in college? One reason behind my horror is that the gains women have made these past decades are now at risk of being undone politically.

Which is why U.S. elections in November should be worrying women everywhere.

This election counts in ways that other recent balloting did not, at least not in the same way. Decisions about Supreme Court justices and other judicial appointments during the tenure of the next Administration will affect for at least 20 years many issues crucial in the lives of women, and of Jews.

Here are three to mull over:

- Our rights to privacy—private decisions about contraception, about our medical records, doctors' visits, drugs we buy, even the purchase of an in-home pregnancy test—could be confiscated.
- Life-saving stem cell research would likely be outlawed.
- The future of reproductive rights hangs in the balance. *Roe v Wade* may be overturned by a more conservative Supreme Court. Our right to choose when and if we will bear children could well be trammeled.

LILITH has been covering abortion rights since the magazine began to publish. We've pointed out—and will say again here—that if the forces on the Right have their way, even the most traditional Jew will not be able to follow Jewish law on abortion, which (to state a complicated position very simply) says that if the mother's life is in danger from the continuation of a pregnancy, her life takes precedence over that of the fetus. Period. If the fetus is a "pursuer," chasing after the life and health of the woman carrying it, abortion is mandated to save her. A very different position from that taken by, for example, the Catholic church, which privileges the fetus over the woman.

Seems clear enough that Jewish women have a special stake in preserving, among other freedoms, the right to choose.

But wait!

To many young women, these issues seem to be lodged in the deep past. Most don't know personally anyone who desperately needed and sought out an illegal abortion in the pre-*Roe* days. Nor anyone who was grateful even for a dangerous back-alley abortion, though more grateful for the cleaner ones performed by a kindly doctor under the guise of doing an "appendectomy." Nor anyone who, panicky, scrounged money from friends for a trip to Puerto Rico or other offshore locale or distant US city where there were reputed to be willing doctors. Few women voting today know of what it was like, before *Roe* became the law of the land, to travel, pregnant, to one of the few states where abortion was legal with a note in hand from her local doctor. One woman read her—unsealed—referral note on the plane: "Dear Abortionist. What you are about to do is a sin and a crime." There was a climate of hatred against women abroad then which may surface again.

Why am I frightened that this may happen? Simple. Because too few women will get out to vote in November.

Making sure that women are registered and get to the polls should be at the top of the agenda not only for political parties, but for Jewish women's organizations and—crucially—for campus groups as well. It turns out that young women—18 to 24—are less likely to vote than men their age, and less likely than females a little older. Maybe this is because many are still students, and students living away from home often have trouble organizing themselves to get absentee ballots from their home states, or registering to vote in their transposed locations.

And single women are the least likely to vote!

Unmarried women are less likely to vote than married women, married men and unmarried men. "Unmarried women can decide elections" declares the nonpartisan "Women's Voices Women Vote" website (mvwv.org). Since recent statistics from the 2001 National Jewish Population Survey show that 25% of Jewish women are not married, we have to make special efforts to ensure that they defy the voting statistics come November.

Young Jewish women (the best-educated women in North America) are well represented in that pool of college and graduate students who aren't living at the address where they first got a driver's license or registered to vote. What are campus groups doing? Book clubs? Sororities? Softball teams?

Hillels and other Jewish campus organizations need to organize voter registration drives among their peers. And each of you reading this needs to talk to other women about registering to vote.

Then comes the hard part. After they are registered to vote, how to get women to the polls, come November? Maybe the language has to be like the speak outs—your vote IS your voice in the political arena. You have to help break women's silence.

Because this upcoming U.S. election has such crucial human and women's issues on the line, it's our obligation—as people who live, breathe, get pregnant, have babies, have abortions, get sick, want our medical records private, need medicines, want our daughters to be able to live their lives in peace and as Jews—to make sure that every woman we know votes her self-interest this fall.

Susan Weidman Schneider
Editor-in-Chief

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Kol Ishah:
The Voices of Women.

Traditionally, the **voice** of the Jewish woman was **not to be heard** in public, lest it arouse men. **No more.** These pages are for news about Jewish women, **in our own strong voices.**

Fixer-Uppers

Next time something at home breaks, don't ask a man to fix it. This is not just to avoid perpetuating tiresome stereotypes of helpless women, but because using tools is fun. **Julie Sussman** and **Stephanie Glakas-Tener**, co-authors of the book *Dare to Repair* (HarperCollins, $14.95) agree. So does **Barbara Kavovit**, who designs and markets a line of home-improvement kits designed especially for women.

Dare to Repair is billed as a book for women who are tired of waiting for the men in their lives to fix what's broken. And if the stereotype of the Jewish man as unable to relate to anything as three-dimensional as a toolbox holds true, they may wait forever. Kavovit's 30-piece toolkit, complete with hardware, hex sets and hammer, comes in a kidney-shaped carrying case with a translucent blue cover.

Barbara Kavovit

Fall from a High Place: The Firing of Debby Hirshman

"My God, she built the institution. I just don't know what happened." This is how a top Jewish organizational professional described the departure of **Debby Hirshman**, the executive director who brought the widely praised Jewish Community Center in Manhattan from dream to $85-million reality.

Two years ago, Hirshman was profiled in LILITH as one of the highest-ranking and most visible women executives in the Jewish world. Last September, *erev* Rosh Hashanah, she was suddenly fired. Until Hirshman's dismissal, she was praised by board members and donors for her leadership; she had brought in a new generation of young philanthropists and attracted some 12,000 members. She'd also gained the support of all 17 Upper West Side synagogues, skillfully threading the needle on issues like Shabbat hours.

Hirshman said that her dismissal took her by surprise, coming a week after rounds of praise from board members and staff at her 50th birthday party. On the eve of Rosh Hashanah, she expected to discuss with the board's executive committee whether to hire an external management consultant. Instead, according to Hirshman, two executive committee members told her that they had lost confidence in her capacity to manage the institution. Then they asked her to resign.

AMY STONE

Debby Hirshman with her partner's newborn son, Myles Cobi Hirshman Roven, partner Janice Roven (left) and daughter Elisheva Hirshman-Green.

JCC board co-chair **Peter A. Joseph** told LILITH in a phone interview: "Basically Debby had a wonderful run, and it was time for a change. All 14 members of the executive committee approved her leaving, and 56 of the 59 board members." Joseph noted that no board members or top staff resigned in protest over Hirshman's dismissal. **Elizabeth H. Scheuer**, the other board co-chair and the wife of Peter Joseph, echoed his words: "Debby was a fabulous visionary and creator. It is often the case that visionaries and creators are best at visioning and creating."

The JCC has yet to inform its members directly of Hirshman's forced resignation. The official silence has spawned rumors, especially when Jewish Women Watching (JWW), an anonymous group using dramatic tactics to challenge sexism and other discriminatory practices in the Jewish community, awarded the JCC the "Fear of Too Queer Award," announcing in a press release that "Debby Hirshman spent a dozen years building a showplace JCC…. Yet soon after she became more vocal about her lesbian identity, the JCC board forced her to resign. Congrats to the JCC for letting misogyny and homophobia triumph."

Those close to the organization say, in fact, that Hirshman had been out as a lesbian to the board for some time, and point to the JCC's pioneering gay and lesbian programming. The charge of misogyny seems misplaced as well, given that almost all the institution's senior staffers are female.

Hirshman's micromanagement appears to have been a more serious issue than the JWW charges. According to Hirshman, the board's concern was, "Look, she was still worried about picking up towels in the locker room."

The perception that Hirshman was concentrating on minutiae rather than the remaining $20 million needed to complete the building's $85-million capital campaign seems to have been a sore point for board members. Hirshman's overall management skills also

Hirshman in 2001.

became an issue. As for the towels, Hirshman said, "In an environment and business that didn't have any systems yet, there was micro-managing people in roles they never did before. Often that word is ascribed to me as a negative. But that was what assured the quality needed to move forward."

In fact, those close to the JCC characterize Hirshman as both charismatic and difficult. Despite her philosophy of inclusiveness, she reportedly was capable of bringing staff members to tears.

Said one insider who did not want to be identified: "The JCC board had the right to do what it did, but because of the precipitous way it was done it led people to believe that something was wrong. It was bad for the board and bad for Debby. But it's settled."

Not so fast. No matter what precipitated the firing of this powerful woman, the institution that celebrates itself as "a place of safety and comfort," taking pride in its Center for Mindfulness, will have to pay more than lip service to the innovations and values that were Hirshman's vision.

In the words of **Barry Shrage**, long-time president of the Combined Jewish Philanthropies of Greater Boston, summing up Hirshman's accomplishments: "She created a brand new institution that was the talk of the Jewish world. She raised a huge amount of money for a project that people thought couldn't be done. She created programs that were the buzz of the Jewish community."

It is not easy to institutionalize a founding director's vision. The challenge now will be to keep that spirit part of the JCC, so that it doesn't become a big-budget Jewish organization built by a visionary who took the vision with her.

—Amy Stone

Eek! To "Zeek"

The two-year-old magazine Zeek (www.zeek.net) declares that its mission is "to present alternative Jewish voices of criticism, literature, and religious thought, in an intelligent, but non-academic, context." Indeed. In his recent "I Hear America Bling-Blinging," **Jay Michaelson** writes about all of the overweight Americans he sees while visiting his mother in Florida. "In Tampa at least, you see people at the mall who could only belong to the circus in most of Europe, Africa, or Asia," he writes. "I look at and invariably wonder: just how do they have sex anyway?" Another Michaelson piece talks about what it feels like to be mostly-gay-but-not-completely at strip clubs. If by "non-academic" the editors—four Jewish males—mean denigrating women and using cruel descriptions of overweight people, they're right on the money. But as for labeling themselves "intelligent," now, that's a stretch. Sorry, guys, your magazine is downright offensive.

—Ilana Kramer

Jewish Women Make News

Mazal tov to...
Blu Greenberg, author, teacher, and founder/president of Jewish Orthodox Feminist Alliance, named in Women's Enews' 2003 list of 21 "Leaders of the 21st Century." Greenberg, a tireless activist whose causes include the plight of *agunoth*, told Womens Enews that she looks forward to the advent of Orthodox female rabbis.

...**Dr. Bernice Graftstein**, the Weill Cornell professor of neuroscience, in New York City, for her **Mika Salpteter** Lifetime Achievement Award which she received this winter. This award honors an individual with outstanding career achievements in neuroscience, who has also significantly promoted the professional advancement of women within the field.

Dr. Grafstein, long an advocate for women scientists and an acknowledged role model for many of her women students and colleagues, was the first woman to be elected President of the Society for Neuroscience.

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We are sad to report the deaths of these outstanding women:

Enid Dame, 60, of cancer. In her seven books of poetry, she deftly mixed images from Brooklyn with Midrash. Sometimes Biblical matriarchs appear in her poems, but reimagined in modern guise, as in this excerpt from her poem entitled Lilith, one of Dame's favorite characters: *Two against one/It isn't fair! I cried/And stormed out of Eden/Into history .../now/I work in New Jersey/ take art lessons/live with a cabdriver...* Dame was one of the editors of the anthology *Which Lilith?*

Author **Olivia Goldsmith**, 54. Her best-selling novel *The First Wives Club,* a comedy-fantasy about the delicious revenge three women take on the husbands who have left them for younger women, became a hit film. Goldsmith died from complications after receiving anesthesia during cosmetic surgery.

Dr. **Gertie Marx**, 91, who pioneered the use of the epidural anaesthesia during childbirth. Born in Frankfurt, she left Germany in the 1930s after the Nazis beginning barring Jews from the universities. She received her medical degree in Switzerland in 1937, afterwards immigrating to New York.

Struggle Over Reproductive Rights Heats Up

Since January, the Bush Administration has twice bypassed the Senate to install anti-choice Federal judges whose appointments have been opposed by reproductive rights advocates. On January 16, while Congress was in recess, **President Bush** appointed conservative Judge **Charles W. Pickering** of Mississippi to the Fifth Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals. The Constitution gives the President the power to make certain appointments without hearings—including judges—while Congress is not in session. Pickering's record shows a clear anti-choice agenda; he also opposed the Equal Rights Amendment. And Pickering's critics point to a decidedly troubling record on civil rights. On February 20, Bush seated Alabama Attorney General **William H. Pryor, Jr.**, who opposes a woman's right to abortion and also calls for more "Christian influence" in the government.

Four days later, in his State of the Union address, Bush announced that federal funding for abstinence programs (which the ACLU has called a Trojan horse that smuggles in the values of the Christian right) will double. In a less-than-oblique reference to women's hard-won reproductive rights, he then added, "All of us," he said, "parents and schools and government, must work together to counter the negative influence of the culture, and to send the right messages to our children." Without even uttering such hot-button words as "abortion" or "birth control," Bush made it clear that his administration was continuing its war on women.

On January 22, the thirty-first anniversary of *Roe v. Wade*, California Senator **Barbara Boxer** (D) and New York Representative **Jerrold Nadler** (D) introduced the Freedom of Choice Act, which, among other things, would prevent the government from discriminating against a woman because of her reproductive decisions. Simultaneously, the thousands of anti-choice marchers filled the National Mall to listen to the President, who spoke by phone from New Mexico, thanking participants for their efforts to build "a lasting culture of life, a compassionate society in which every child is born into a loving family and protected by law."

In related news, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration in January recommended, in a 23-4 vote, that the so-called Plan-B pill or "morning-after" pill be made available without a prescription. Nearly four dozen members of Congress, as well as some conservative groups, such as the Christian Medical Association and Concerned Women for America, object to the measure. In February, Attorney General **John Ashcroft** subpoenaed medical records of women who have had so-called "partial-birth abortions," claiming these files were needed in order to enforce the "Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act," which President Bush signed into law last November.

—Alice Sparberg Alexiou

Send your email address to Lilithmag@aol.com to receive updates on the April 25 march for reproductive rights in Washington, DC. Let us know if you want to march under a LILITH banner with editors, writers and others.

Preventing Sexual Abuse by Clergy

The Conservative movement has for the first time issued guidelines for dealing with sexual abuse and harassment in synagogues. Conservative leaders were following on the heels of the more liberal Reform and Reconstructionist movements. The Conservative guidelines include admonitions to rabbis and cantors to maintain appropriate boundaries in their relationships with the people they serve, and state "their relationships with congregants are not those of equals; any action that seeks to exploit these relationships may constitute a breach of their authority."

On Screen—Shaking Up Those Tired Old Gender Assumptions

Nancy Meyers and **Ilene Chaiken**, nearly unknown outside Hollywood circles until a few months ago, have each mounted a challenge to the entertainment industry's assumption about what sells on screen. Turns out that television viewers and moviegoers want more than young women with flawless skin and hips to play female leads.

In her film *Something's Gotta Give,* screenwriter Nancy Meyers, 54, gives us Diane Keaton as Erica Barry, a woman playwright in her mid-50s who is divorced, successful, *and* sexy. Reporters in the Jewish press who have written about the movie have assumed that the Erica is also Jewish, a fact that Meyers, when interviewed, has not refuted. (Keaton received a Golden Globe for her role; at press time she had been nominated for an Oscar) In a nod to reality, the character (like the actress who plays her) sports actual age lines in her face. And—here's a delectable twist—Keaton's character has two boyfriends, one a much younger doctor (Keanu Reeves), the other a sixtyish Lothario (Jack Nicholson). And while some criticize Meyers' fantasy depiction of what middle age is like for most single women, the film has clearly struck a chord. Finally, it seems, Hollywood is waking up to something that Europeans have long known—that women often become more desirable as they mature.

Ilene Chaiken, 46, is the creator and executive producer of Showtime's hot and controversial new series *The L-Word,* about a posse of L.A. lesbians, including one who, like Chaiken, is a Jewish writer. Chaiken, who lives in Los Angeles with her female partner of 20 years and their 8-year-old twin daughters, has had a longtime association with Showtime. She told the press that when she first pitched her *L-Word* idea to the cable network three years ago, nobody took her seriously.

—*A.S.A*

Headscarves and Feminists

The controversy in France over the Muslim headscarf has not gone away with the passing of the new law barring the wearing of religious symbols in educational institutions....Among the most vocal opponents of the headscarf are staunch leftists and enlightened liberals, who view it as an alien imposition on European France's social and cultural common ground. They do not believe their position contradicts the European and French principle of freedom of expression.

Defenders of the Muslim women's right to cover their hair, and even their faces, actually include some militant feminists. They come from the point of view that a woman has the right to freely express herself and her body—and Muslim women themselves use the same argument. They feel that a devout Muslim woman should be permitted to wear both a daring miniskirt and a headscarf.

The headscarf is not simply an emblem of female modesty—it is a public declaration that the wearer is Muslim....Of all the major religions' symbols, it is specifically the headscarf that has become the one theoretically threatening to crush the secular French republic. It's not the skullcap, not the turban, not the beard, and certainly not the crucifix—all of them predominantly male symbols....Not only does the headscarf religious symbol bother France because it is Muslim-Arab, they claim, but even more so because it belongs to women.

The feminine aspect is important because women historically have been test cases for the spirit of the times and their crises. From the leprosy that silenced Miriam, Moses' sister, after she dared to speak her mind, to the witch hunts of Europe in the Middle Ages and abortion hysteria in America today—any cultural change that frightens the conservative establishment takes a brutal toll on women. —Avirama Golan (*Ha'aretz*, Israeli daily 2/24/04)

We are sad to report the deaths of these outstanding women:

Yiddish star **Fraydele Oysher**, 90, who sang cantorial music in the Yiddish theatre during the 1930s, decades before Reform and Conservative synagogues allowed women cantors. Oysher was the daughter and sister of cantors, and mother of comedian Marilyn Michaels. One of Oysher's favorite stage roles was the *yeshiva bucher* who surprises everybody by revealing that underneath his trousers and *tzitzes* he is, in fact, a girl.

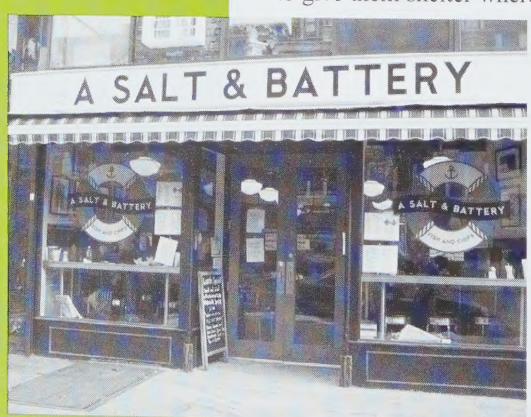
Esther Leah Ritz, 85, of Milwaukee, known locally and nationally for her fearlessly outspoken advocacy, progressive activism and philanthropy on behalf of Israel, women, human rights and education. She had been a LILITH supporter for more than 15 years. The Wisconsin Jewish Chronicle reported that because she was an atheist, there was no funeral or shiva, nor would anyone be reciting Kaddish for her.

kol ishah

Political wives—they just can't win

Remember how **Hillary Rodham Clinton** infuriated absolutely everybody when her husband was running for President? The reason why people hated her, pundits said, was her assertion that in a Clinton presidency the American people would get "two for the price of one." But during the short-lived but intense Dean candidacy, we had the spectacle of **Dr. Judith Steinberg Dean** being pilloried for the opposite reason: she was too *in*visible.

Even the take-no-prisoners New York Times columnist **Maureen Dowd** dumped on this accomplished but unadorned woman for her expressed desire to recuse herself from the media circus accompanying her hyperactive husband, choosing instead to care for her patients and remain near her children. Instead, Judith Dean was portrayed as a liability to her husband's political ambitions. Does a man who aspires to the Presidency feel that he has to apologize for being married to—dare we say it—a *Jewish doctor*?



We have no comment about the name of this cafe recently opened in New York City.

Who's Minding The Baby?

Two years ago, **Neta Stahl** and **Yitzhak Melamed**, Ph.D. candidates in Jewish Studies and the parents of **Yonathan** and **Alma**, then four years and six months respectively, spent the annual meeting of the Association for Jewish Studies (AJS) conference "going up and down the escalator, staring at the closed doors of the auditoriums." Last year, they didn't even bother to attend. But, this year, thanks to a groundbreaking and powerful grass-roots initiative to provide child care during the conference, Stahl could nurse her baby, light Hanukkah candles with her toddler and still interview for jobs and present her research to her peers. And she and her husband could support one another as colleagues instead of trading childcare responsibilities in exchange for half-time participation at the meeting, which took place in Boston last December.

When in past years AJS members—most of them women—had requested that the board address the issue, their request was denied, with the AJS board citing financial constraints and liability concerns. This year, however, academics planning to attend called the board repeatedly and argued the case to the executive director.

Their effort paid off. An auction of second-hand cashmere sweaters organized by **Laura Levitt** and **Miriam Peskowitz** raised $300 for the cause. The AJS Women's Caucus also contributed—$500—as did many other donors. Parents paid a sliding fee, based on need, to use the facilities, which included kosher snacks, rented cribs, toys and high-chairs.

Ten families made use of the child care services, including some who had already made private baby-sitting arrangements. They had been encouraged to bring along their caregivers and kids to use the facilities, to show support.

"The current practices of parenting and childcare in this country stress individual, not communal solutions," said Peskowitz, co-chair of the AJS Women's Caucus board, and visiting associate professor of rabbinics at the Reconstructionist College. "[It] still falls predominantly on women's shoulders. All of us who have tried to parent, teach and continue scholarly life with young children in our lives know the toll that it takes."

—Andrea Lieber

Family Violence? Not in *My* Community!

Miklat, the only battered women's shelter in Israel specifically for Orthodox and Haredi (ultra-Orthodox) Jewish women and children, has announced plans to open a second shelter, somewhere in the center of the country. Experts say that the country's current crisis mode has increased violence against women. Miklat founder and president **Estanne Fawer** told LILITH that in the last year and a half, the shelter has had to turn away 70 women and their children because of lack of space. Fawer created Miklat in 1996.

In fact, religious women are less likely to use secular services, so it becomes imperative to give them shelter where they will feel comfortable and welcome.

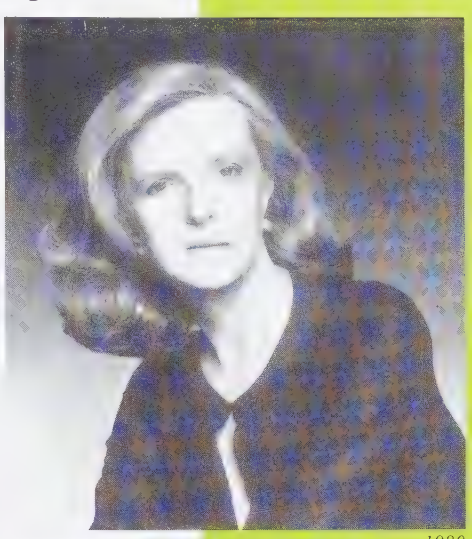
Breaking the silence on abuse in the Orthodox world, both in North America and in Israel, apparently upsets Agudath Israel, an organization representing the ultra-right wing of Orthodoxy. In January, Agudah spokesman **Rabbi Avi Shafran** sent LILITH a press release complaining that the attention now being focused on spousal abuse among Jews is tantamount to Orthodox-bashing.

"All the Orthodox rabbis I am privileged to know are exquisitely sensitive toward women, as they are towards men," he writes. Those who take seriously those rabbis' advice, Rabbi Shafran says, "would be rendered virtually incapable of abusing his or her spouse."

Tell this to the women in the Miklat shelters. *—A.S.A.*

Remembering Georgette Klinger

Georgette Klinger, née Eckstein, died on January 9, 2004 at the age of 88. The porcelain-skinned former beauty contest winner and Czech émigré opened her own beauty salon in 1941 on Madison Avenue, which she later turned into a mini-empire, with salons in nine American cities. My own connection with Ms. Klinger (I always think of her as *Ms* .Klinger) was brief but memorable. I had interviewed her over the phone in 1986 for an article that culled financial tips from successful, high-profile women. When the article appeared—in Cosmopolitan—I sent her a copy. Within days, I received a phone call from her personal secretary. Klinger had "adored" my article and was inviting me to lunch. Klinger greeted me in a restaurant on Manhattan's Upper East Side. Then in her seventies, she was slim and striking in a chic suit, her artfully coiffed and colored golden hair curling buoyantly around her shoulders. Her pet poodle Pushka sat in a roomy Louis Vuitton case at her feet.



1980

We chatted amiably over lunch. As if to confirm my unspoken surmise that she was Jewish, Klinger told me of her family's escape from Czechoslovakia during the Nazi period. She had persuaded a Nazi guard into letting the family onto a departing train, despite the fact that there were no more tickets available. Without seeming immodest, she let me know that it was her cool, blonde beauty and considerable poise that had helped her. I was fascinated. Surely her story ought to appear in print; had she ever considered writing an autobiography? She had; a writer had actually been hired to work on it, but the project stalled. This seemed a pity and I said so. When we parted, Klinger told me to call her secretary to schedule a facial—her treat.

That same afternoon I wrote an effusive note to express my appreciation for the lunch, the upcoming facial, the pleasure of her company. Days later, I received another phone call: Ms. Klinger wanted to turn over the autobiography to a new writer—me! I accepted immediately.

We began to meet in her Park Avenue apartment a few times a month, sitting in her living room as I fiddled with the tape recorder I'd bought, arranged my notes, asked the questions I felt worth asking. But somehow our earlier rapport had cooled: she was evasive about answering, and when she did she often contradicted earlier information she had given me. Certain things, she let me know, would be too painful to talk about.

Georgette Klinger treatment room

Sometime her maid served us sandwiches of melted cheese and tomato. After one of these lunches Klinger presented me with a somewhat unwelcome gift: one of her old coats—black cashmere and beautifully tailored. When I tried it on, she smiled. "It's perfect." I was less sure. The coat was lovely, but something was amiss. It was the sort of offering one made to the hired help—the unwanted clothes, neatly folded and piled in a shopping bag from Bergdorf Goodman. I took the coat, but never wore it and eventually gave it away. Our meetings dwindled to once a month, and then every other month. Soon I received a letter from the secretary, informing me that Ms. Klinger had decided not to pursue the project after all. I was relieved, despite the fact that the coat and the sandwiches constituted the only payment I ever received.

When I learned that she had died, I felt sad that she could not ever commit to the stories she had to tell. Perhaps the surface beauty she touted—and burnished—in her salons was as deep as she she was able to go.

—Yona Zeldis McDonough

Readers Respond

JEWISH TEENS AND ORAL SEX

I very much enjoyed the last issue of LILITH. But I was deeply disturbed by the article on the "oral sex epidemic."

The prevalence of oral sex among Jewish teens reflects, to my mind, a failure to articulate and promote a code of Jewish sexual ethics that emphasizes the holiness of the body and the value of modest behavior. Teenagers who are preparing to become b'nai mitzvah should be educated about the potential of the body to serve as a conduit for divinity, both through its active participation in prayer (where we kneel and bow to God) and through its adornment in ritual garments (tallit, tefillin, etc.). They should be learning, too, about the injunction to "walk modestly with your God" (Micah 6:8) and to "not awaken love until it please" (Song of Songs 2:7)—calls not for prudery and abstinence, but for a deep and abiding awe for the beauty and sanctity that can be achieved through appropriate expressions of sexual intimacy. (p.s.—of course, I also think Lilith should take upon itself to articulate such a code!)

Ilana Kurshan
New York, NY

I want to congratulate LILITH and Ilana Kramer on the excellent article on sex and Jewish adolescent girls. I would like to share [it] with a group of professional and lay leaders of the Reform Movement at a weekend think tank on Jewish adolescents. One correction—when I'm cited in the article: my title is Co-Director of the URJ Youth Division. Rabbi Eve Rudin is the Director of NFTY.

L'Shalom,
Andrew Davids
New York NY

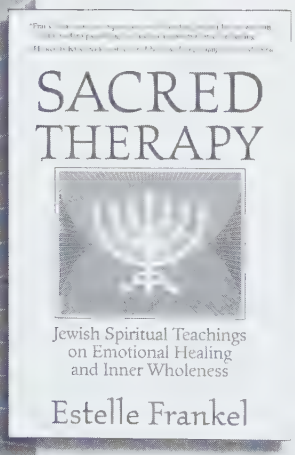
Kudos on the article about oral sex among teens. It horrifies me that this is happening. Brings back memories, too. I was abused as a child, and performed oral sex on my father many times. It's degrading; I can't believe that these girls will come away from this act unscathed. It will affect them and every relationship they have in the future. And it's true, they are not getting pleasure....

Mary Corbett
via e-mail

SACRED THERAPY

Jewish Spiritual Teachings on Emotional Healing and Inner Wholeness

Estelle Frankel



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—**Rabbi Tirzah Firestone**, author of *The Receiving: Reclaiming Jewish Women's Wisdom*

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"It's Not Sex" tipped me over the edge. As a regular shul-goer I knew about inappropriate teen-age behavior at prayer services. As a day-school parent I knew about "being on the circuit" for a year and a half at 12 and 13, about large cash gifts, and even about children attending the parties but not the bar or bat mitzvah services. I thought I knew all about over-the-top parties. But I did NOT know about the epidemic of way-under-age one-sided oral sex in general and how that plays itself out in Jewish spaces and events.

Since the publication of LILITH's article, I have been talking to day school administrators, religious school principals, rabbis, and parents about what can be done. The surprise to me is that this news is actually old news to many. My child is eight; my hope is that in the next four or five years it will be possible to effect a cultural change. I hope my community will cooperate in setting limits and publishing guidelines for parents, and in the process reset the norms; both my child's day school and my shul say they are willing to work on this. In terms of bar/bat mitzvah, I call it "Take Back the Mitzvah." For me, the issue is not about oral sex per se (since my personal theory, developed in adulthood, is that men who don't like cunnilingus don't really like sex). It is about ensuring that limits exist to keep children of both genders physically and psychologically safe.

Jonina Duker
North Bethesda, MD

CARING FOR THE KIDS ISN'T ONLY FOR WOMEN

I just wanted to thank Susan Weidman Schneider for the important editorial in the latest issue of LILITH (Winter 2003-4). This is a wonderful issue over all with essays on sex, food and children. More specifically, in her "From the Editor" column, Susan writes about the Association for Jewish Studies and our efforts to bring childcare to the organization's annual meeting for the first time this winter. She also makes important connections between these efforts and the recent study "Do Babies Matter," the first national data on how professors with children fare in academe. Needless to say, the results are not good for women. Despite the fact that we want to believe that childcare is not *just* a women's issue, the effects of having children on the careers of academic women are quite negative, and this is not the case for academic men.

Laura Levitt
Philadelphia, PA

The writer is Director of Jewish Studies, Temple University.

Watch for a LILITH special report on the effects of child-raising on the careers of Jewish women in the next issue of LILITH.

LILITH welcomes articles, fiction, poetry, and memoirs. We reserve the right to edit letters. No submissions can be returned without SASE.
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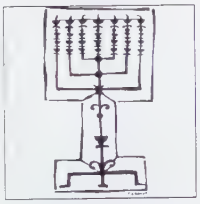
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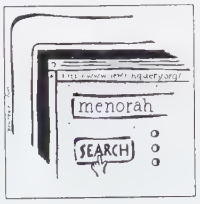

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Less than three months after coming out of Auschwitz and Bergen-Belsen, Hadassah Rosensaft and other Holocaust survivors met with President Truman's special representative, standing to her right.

At a time when the nation's attention is focused on how to remember—and memorialize —a cataclysm such as 9/11, we can learn from

The Woman Who Shaped the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum

Widely regarded by Holocaust survivors as one of their matriarchs, Dr. Hadassah Rosensaft (1912-1997) was imprisoned by the Nazis in Auschwitz-Birkenau and Bergen-Belsen. She kept 149 Jewish children alive in Bergen-Belsen from December 1944 until their liberation on April 15, 1945. Immediately after the war, she was one of the leaders of the Jewish Displaced Persons in the British Zone in Germany and later became a founding member of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council. In her fascinating new memoir, just released by the Holocaust Museum, we get a glimpse into how Rosensaft proposed to honor the dead, respect the memories of survivors, and teach those who were never there.

The United States government donated the land for the Holocaust Museum, which is located on one of the most prominent sites of the American capital, just off the Mall. The building itself, however, had to be constructed with privately raised funds. The U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council discussed at great length whether it was to be a Jewish or an American Museum. As Elie Wiesel had written in 1979 in his letter submitting the report of the President's Commission on the Holocaust to President Carter, while millions of innocent civilians were tragically killed by the Nazis and must be remembered, "there exists a moral imperative for special emphasis on the six million Jews. While not all victims were Jews, *all* Jews were victims, destined for annihilation solely because they were born Jewish." Some survivors would have preferred to have the Museum concentrate exclusively on the Jewish genocide. I disagreed strongly. The Museum was, after all, supposed to be an American

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national monument. As such it had to include the suffering of others. In the end, we agreed that all the victims of Nazi brutality would be remembered in the Museum, but its essence would be the Jewish tragedy.

On October 18, 1985, the groundbreaking ceremony took place. I was honored to break the ground together with the Secretary of the Interior, Donald P. Hodel. We buried six urns containing soil and ashes from Auschwitz, Treblinka, Theresienstadt, the Warsaw Jewish cemetery, and Bergen-Belsen on the site of the future Museum.

One of our most important goals was to establish a memorial at the Museum dedicated to the 1.5 million Jewish children killed by the Germans during the Holocaust. This project was undertaken by the "Committee to Remember the Children." I was delegated by the Council to serve on that committee. One of the committee's most interesting programs was to develop ways of teaching the stories of the annihilated Jewish children to fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-graders in an age appropriate way so as to avoid dwelling on the horrors and encourage them to develop sympathy for these young victims. We also wanted the Museum to have a wall dedicated to the murdered children. Schoolchildren throughout the Untied States were asked to paint an expression of their feelings on ceramic tiles for this wall. We received 25,000 tiles from 400 schools in 30 states, from which 3,000 tiles were chosen. I cried when I saw a tile on which an eight-year-old boy had painted two Sabbath candlesticks with two lit candles in them, underneath which he had written, "And they did not have a Sabbath."

As the building of the Museum progressed, the Content Committee, to which I belonged, came to the conclusion that although the exhibition would for the most part be chronological, certain important messages would require occasional deviations from strict chronology. We also discussed the artifacts. Over the years, we had collected many historical items from abroad. The Polish government gave us a boxcar similar to those that had transported hundreds of thousands of Jews to Auschwitz, Treblinka, and the other death camps. At first, it was suggested that all visitors to the museum would have to walk through this boxcar. I objected strongly to this idea; I had already been in such a railroad car once in my life and I did not want to be in one ever again, even for a few seconds. I was certain that other survivors would feel the same way. An alternate path was created around the boxcar so that visitors could choose not to go through it.

"It was suggested that [women's] hair be exhibited. I objected vehemently."

Another subject we debated was whether we should exhibit actual human hair. The Museum had received women's hair that had been shorn upon their arrival at Auschwitz. It was suggested that the hair be exhibited next to the mountains of shoes, eyeglasses, and suitcases taken from the victims. I sat through those meetings in pain, remembering how my own head had been shaved. Again, I objected vehemently. I said that hair cannot be equated with shoes or eyeglasses; it is not an object but a part of the body. It was interesting to notice that this objection came only from two female Jewish survivors—Dr. Helen Fagin and myself—perhaps because men do not feel about hair the same way women do. Men are used to shaving daily, while for a woman the shaving of her head is a violation of her womanhood.

We heard arguments that the Jewish religious law does not prohibit the public display of hair. We heard that scientists say hair is not a living tissue. But this was not the issue. It was a matter of human sensitivity. Maybe the hair that would be displayed was even mine. It should remain in Auschwitz at the place of the crime. Finally, after many discussions, the Content Committee agreed to abandon the idea of displaying the hair. I often heard it said, even by members of the Council, that this Museum was not being built for survivors. I agree, but unfortunately it was being built *because* of the Holocaust. Therefore, our sensitivity had to be taken into consideration.

PHOTO: USHMM

Rosensaft delivering a speech at the Museum on the 50th anniversary of VE day. Seated next to the podium is the Secretary of Defense.

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With Elie Wiesel and the U.S. Secretary of the Interior at the Holocaust Museum groundbreaking ceremony.

"I always felt that the stories of the Jewish children saved in Bergen-Belsen should be told by the children themselves."

The Museum has a very important department of oral history, videotapes of interviews with survivors of the Holocaust. I contributed to the oral history library in a small way. I always felt that the stories of the Jewish children saved and liberated in Bergen-Belsen should be told by the children themselves. Accordingly, I went to Israel in 1991 and interviewed 15 of my former children. Videotapes of those interviews are now part of the Museum's archives and library.

Finally, in April 1993, after years of hard work and planning by many who gave their time, efforts, ideas, and money with great compassion and dedication, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum was inaugurated. Various official events took place before the actual opening. On April 20, at the Capital Rotunda, we observed the Days of Remembrance honoring the survivors and commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Warsaw ghetto uprising. That evening, we assembled at the Hall of Remembrance and mixed together the soil of six of the concentration and death camps and placed it under the eternal flame.

The Museum was officially opened to the public on April 22, 1993.... I was especially gratified that one of the speakers that day, together with President Clinton and Elie Wiesel, was President Chaim Herzog of Israel, who had been a British army officer in 1945. Some members of the Council had objected to President Herzog's participation, arguing that only Americans should speak at the Museum's opening. However, a few of us felt strongly that the president of the Jewish state, who happened also to have served in one of the liberating Allied armies, was in a different category from the other heads of state. We insisted that President Herzog had to participate in the program and we prevailed.

The ceremony was followed by a special program in memory of the 1.5 million Jewish children murdered by the Germans during the Holocaust. Some 400 guests heard a group of children telling the stories of their grandparents: survivors, liberators, and rescuers. One of them was my granddaughter, Jodi, who began by saying, "My grandmother, Hadassah Rosensaft, has two birthdays: August 26, 1912, the day she was born, and April 15, 1945, when she was liberated from the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp."

From *Yesterday: My Story* by **Hadassah Rosensaft**, published by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2004. The book may be obtained from the museum, 1-800-259-9998.

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After the Seders, Snow by Tzivia Gover

I say no to soup and you frown:
"But it's perfect," you say,
"the matzo balls float up like clouds."

Instead, we bundle up, go out
and dig bouquets of daffodils
from under spring snow.

Yellow heads nod up, surprised
to be discovered. We walk beneath
pines weeping low under

white drifts. You reach up, clear
branch after branch, then
stand back approving as

green again
they float skyward
like clouds.

Tzivia Gover is the author of *Mindful Moments for Stressful Days* (Storey Books, 2002). Her poetry has appeared in *The Bark* magazine, *The Berkshire Review*, *Peregrine*, and *Bridges*. She teaches poetry to adults in Holyoke, Mass.

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Keeping Divorced Parents Apart...

A Kashrut of Families

by Shala Erlich

Everything that had happened when she was really little was dormant, everything but the positive certitude... that the natural way for a child to have her parents was separate and successive, like her mutton and her pudding or her bath and her nap.

Henry James, *What Maisie Knew*

There was almost always a plane flight between my two families. The five hour flight from coast to coast was like the interval between a meat meal and a milk one, in which I absorbed nothing but my own company and the superficial attentions of the stewardesses. I stitched away at embroidery or read straight through *The Yellow Book of Fairy-tales*. Sometimes, inhaling the synthetic, cigarette-tinged air, I stared through the crystals on the window at the wing and sky, avoiding the nauseating, late-seventies, pink and orange upholstery on the seat in front of me. It was good to have this self-contained zone to myself. I enjoyed a certain purity and privacy as I traveled solo between parents who, on the rare occasions they met face to face, radiated such restrained hostility that I wasn't sure if they were the kind of chemicals that couldn't mix or the kind that, if they touched, would leap together, causing a terrifying explosion.

In many ways, my two families were more similar than different. They were both Jewish, bookish, inclined to family outings to plays, museums, the mountains, and the sea. Both loved me and included me as a full member of the family. In fact, much of the tension grew out of the desire of each of my

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parents to spend as much time with me as possible. According to a court-determined "visitation" schedule, I flew to New York to see my Dad for a week at Hanukkah, a week at Passover, and for an increasing number of weeks in the summer as I got older. The final legal agreement, a kind of anti-ketubah, managed to reconcile my parent's conflicting demands, the school calendar, and the Jewish calendar. It stipulated, for example, that "the child shall be placed on the earliest Saturday morning flight of the weekend prior to the 1st day of Passover and she will be returned on the earliest Sunday morning flight on the weekend subsequent thereto." Accordingly, I shuttled back and forth with a large, red velvet suitcase that had been a wedding present to my parents. It was one of the few pieces of evidence, other than my own existence, that they had ever been together.

"Going to visit your grandparents for Christmas?" the stewardess asked, materializing in the aisle and handing me a winged, plastic pin with a metallic sheen. "Sheila? You're the unaccompanied minor, right?" I smiled and nodded: my identity—my name, my Jewishness, my family situation—was too unusual and complex for most strangers to guess. I could explain it if I felt like it, but often it wasn't worth the trouble.

Traversing the divide between my two families, I developed from a very early age a system of separation and boundaries between them: a kashrut of families. A major portion of the Jewish laws of kashrut is based on a simple prohibition: don't cook a kid in its mother's milk. But this core rule is ringed with reinforcing rules, expanding into a network of spatial and temporal separations. So there are guidelines for separate dishes, sponges and even dishwashers. What started out, presumably, as a law to prevent cruelty—cooking a baby animal in its mother's milk—has become an ethical framework that reminds us during every meal (and in the preparation and clean-up) to be mindful of distinctions. In my personal version of kashrut, the basic rule was "don't mix your families." I built a series of fences around this law, made up of more specific rules.

I cannot remember my mother and father together. I was 18 months old in 1972, when my Mom and I moved out of our house in the Oakland Hills to live in a group house of women in Berkeley. Three months later we moved in with my step-Dad, whom my Mom married in my aunt's backyard when I was two and a half. All three of us went on the honeymoon, a car-camping and canoeing trip in the Okeefanokee Swamp. My Abba, as I called my father, and step-Mom, who met in graduate school when my parents were still together, lived together for a few years and then married when I was seven in another backyard wedding, at my grandparents' house in Los Angeles. After the wedding, we changed into shorts, and off I went on my second honeymoon, this time to the Del Coronado Hotel on the beach in San Diego.

My Mom and step-Dad had two more children: my brother Tal and my sister Ayala, each of us three years apart. We lived in Berkeley, California. On my Abba and step-Mom's side, in New York, I got another brother and sister, Aaron and Margaret, eight and 11 years younger than I am, whom I visited during most of my vacations. This was the story I mapped out for people, in more or less detail, when they asked, or looked confused at the mention of multiple parents, more siblings than they knew about, or complicated geography. Yes, I'm the only one from my original parents. No, they're not step-brothers and sisters, they're half, because we share a mom/dad—and they feel like regular brothers and sisters. No, I don't like one family better, I like them both equally.

I was 7. Off I went again— on my second honeymoon.

I presented my explanation with equanimity, even buoyancy. My life came in pleasant multiples of two: two families, two sets of parents and siblings, four pairs of grandparents, 16 Hanukkah presents. It was a rich and bountiful existence. If my families formed a symmetrical and intricate Venn diagram, I lived at the overlapping, densely-inked center.

But while I tried to see myself at the center of two embracing families, at times it was hard not to feel that I actually lived in a battle zone. My mother had a policy of restraint, but her rare lapses and the effort it seemed to take to refrain from expressing her anger at my father gave me the sense that she thought he was untrustworthy and irresponsible. Likewise, my father occasionally lost his temper when he thought my step-Dad usurped his role, most egregiously when, as he remembers it, my step-Dad wanted to adopt me and change my name to his.

One of the best ways to stay safe, I decided, was to follow this rule: never give ammunition to one set of parents about the other. So I wouldn't tell my Mom about the time I fell off a chairlift under Abba's supervision, or threw up at my Los Angeles grandparents' house, or if I didn't like my step-Mom's cooking. And I wouldn't tell my Dad about the stricter rules—unplug the hair dryer, speak in a pleasant tone at the dinner table—in my Mom and step-Dad's household, either as evidence of their tyranny or their moral superiority.

Another rule decreed: do not mix up the customs of each family. Given my sensitivity to rules, this was usually not too hard to do. But once in a while I slipped up. I was caught out once when I suggested to Abba and my step-Mom Muriel, who were choosing a car to buy before the arrival of my baby brother, that our new car be a Volkswagen. It was one of the few makes of cars I knew. Abba, his brow thunderous, responded that it was a German car, and we'd never buy one. A pit suddenly opened before me—indeed, I had already tumbled into it and lay at the bottom feeling clumsy and bruised. In my other family, Volkswagen, whose Bugs were ubiquitous around Berkeley, was a kind of joke. Attracted to the multisyllabic word and the cuteness of the cars, I had suggested Volkswagen as a name for my California brother when my Mom was pregnant. It was hard to know what upset me more in that moment with my father: that I had collided with his dark feelings about the Holocaust, or that I'd violated my rules of family kashrut.

The heaviest and most ornate rule I constructed was this one: do not show the influence the other family has on you, or how intimate you are with them. In California, I called my step Dad "Dad." But since Abba would talk to me about "Mommy and John," I referred to him as

"John" with my New York family. The few times I slipped up and called Abba "Dad" I was petrified he'd realize the truth.

Kashrut can seem onerous and abstract. Sometimes I wondered if my own rules were needlessly burdensome, and thought maybe the whole problem was just in my head. But, in fact, my parents reinforced this rule. Once when I was in college, Abba called when I was out. My roommate Anne, a polite Alabaman, answered the phone. When he identified himself as my father, she asked "Which one?" He replied, "She only has one."

Similarly, several times after I had returned from a sojourn in New York, my Mom commented on how I had picked up one of Muriel's phrases or Abba's facial expressions. Once she said I had a laugh just like his. Worse, that I laughed that particular laugh at the kind of things which he would find funny, but they were not nice things.

During a summer in New York with Abba when I was seven, I stapled my finger while using my mini pink stapler. Abba pulled the staple out and said, "Here—put your finger in my mouth. I'll suck on it and make it feel better." But my California Dad had told me that your mouth is one of the dirtiest germ-infested places around and you should never put a cut finger in it. So I shook my head. Abba kept exhorting me and I kept refusing—I could hear the absolute authority of my step-Dad's voice in my head—but I would not say a word to explain myself.

Rule #2: Do not mix up the customs of each family. Once in a while, I slipped up.

There was one more rule, which helped me avoid these internal conflicts most of the time: inhabit completely the family of the moment. I believed serially in the exclusive monotheism of each family. When my Abba explained to me how important it was that I spend more time with him, I believed him. When my Mom and step-Dad explained to me how important it was that I participate fully in the family, including some vacation time, I believed them. And as long as practical matters—like whom to actually spend that vacation with—didn't get in the way, I could follow this rule pretty well.

The different rules in my two families played out in the realm of Judaism as well. My father's family is stewed in continuous Jewish tradition: through his mother, he is descended from the Baal Shem Tov and from a tenth generation rabbi, the self-appointed Head Rabbi of Los Angeles. For my Softa, my father's mother, religion imbued the world with beauty and meaning, providing a merciful shelter for those she loved. When she lit Shabbat candles, she circled her hands and covered her eyes, pausing for a moment of internal magic that radiated from her face onto her white blouse like the light from the candles. Drawing on her influence, my Abba passed on to me his approach to Jewish observance, including kashrut, as a metaphor for interesting, lovely ideas, and a sentimental link to the past.

My step-Mom, who had converted to Judaism, taught me how to do the shopping for Friday night. In the kitchen, showing me how to mix batter, she'd quote her own mother: "What you need here is some elbow grease!" Her Shabbat dinners were resplendent with tablecloths, flowers, and homemade pie. Her elbow grease made Abba's ideas of Shabbat tangible.

My mother grew up in Westchester, New York, where her parents were active in the Masons. They were enthusiastic eaters, not remotely kosher, and loved seafood in particular. No one remembers how my mother picked up her feeling for Jewishness. She had to ask to go to Hebrew School. One day in late autumn she came home to their apartment and announced that she needed a basement where she could make manure. Manure? Yeah, she wanted a workshop where she could build a "manure" to light for Chanukah.

My step-Dad, a passionate schoolteacher, always communicated a fierce sense of pride in being Jewish (we were the People of the Book) but little interest in following the laws. Our family dinners, strictly observed but lively—much like a good seder—replaced religious observance as the central value in my California family. My friends used to tease me about how my step Dad's teaching manner came through at home, when he started each dinner off with a Topic of Conversation, usually a question that he asked each of us kids in turn. Our Shabbats in this family were informal. I'd say the prayer over the candles in Hebrew. We'd pass around a glass of Manischevitz after my step-Dad held it up, a gleam in his eye, and said something about the joy of life and being all together. My Mom would beam at us and pass around the challah she baked, or in a pinch a slice of regular bread. "L'chaim," we'd say, tearing off small pieces and popping them in our mouths.

Even now I automatically order appropriately when at a restaurant with my kosher-keeping Abba, skipping over the garlic shrimp or linguine with clam sauce I might choose in my mother's company. It only recently occurred to me that this could be viewed as hypocrisy. It is such a deep impulse to change like a chameleon to suit my environment: a question of both appearances and identity. When I catch myself, I tend to see this trait as a form of survival instinct, and mostly a good thing: a responsiveness to cultural cues. When in Jerusalem, one knows what to do. But on the other hand, when in Chinatown....

Since I had two of everything, when the time came, I had two very different bat mitzvahs, one in a Reform temple in Berkeley, the other at an Orthodox shul in New Rochelle. At Beth El, in Berkeley, I led a Saturday service on a sunny November morning. I chanted the first 24 verses of the Torah portion and the whole Haftorah portion, gave a speech, and had a lunch party at home for grandparents, cousins, family friends, my piano teacher, and one of my best friends from school, who was three-quarters Jewish. It was warm enough that day that many of the guests sat out on our deck.

My "Orthodox" bat mitzvah in our New York community, by contrast, took place on a Sunday (the coldest day of the year), according to the deal Abba had negotiated for me with Rabbi Weinberger about what kind of a bat mitzvah he would allow a girl. The rabbi would let me stand on the bima, but instead of reading from the Torah scroll, I'd use a *chumash*, the

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Torah text printed in a study volume. I'd been going to this shul during my New York visits since I was seven. The women sat under their hats or doilies in raised banks of seats on either side. The men's section in the middle was continuous with the bima; they could flow up unimpeded to bless the Torah.

Up until my bat mitzvah, I'd been able to sit with my Abba if I wanted, like a smaller particle that could filter through the divider, impermeable to grown ups, between the sexes. Those were the rules, and as a little girl I spent more effort keeping track of them than wondering about the rationale behind them. But now that I had reached bat mitzvah age I began to question them. Why couldn't women read from the Torah? A friend said women couldn't touch the Torah because they might have their period and contaminate its holiness. My Berkeley Reform education hadn't drawn much from Leviticus or *halakha*, so that was news to me. But since Orthodox girls usually didn't have bat mitzvahs at all, the prospect of mine seemed a bold step beyond the rules.

Growing up, it was clear, would involve judging which rules to respect, and which to disregard.

On the day of my bat mitzvah, we got to shul early and found that the heat hadn't been turned on ahead of time. (A Sunday bat mitzvah took even the maintenance man by surprise.) I sat off to one side on the bima during *shaharit*, the morning prayers, the *chumash* jittering in my lap. I chanted the first bit of the portion of the week, *Shemot*, about Moses and the burning bush, and *Vayetze*, the Torah portion from my first bat mitzvah, about Jacob's dream. Abba says he watched Rabbi Weinberger's face as I started: first a nodding appreciation, eyes closed, savoring this honest-to-goodness, letter-perfect chanting. My voice was no different in pitch, and probably more tuneful, than your average bar mitzvah boy's. Then he opened his eyes and was reminded of the dissonant fact that I was a girl. Puzzlement settled heavily onto his brow. At the end of my speech comparing the two portions, I thanked the rabbi for his ever-warm welcome and "for letting me get this close to the Torah." Laughter, much of it female, rippled through the congregation.

As it happened, I did have my period that day. I kept this to myself. But I wondered whether this vindicated me or them? I had only been getting my period for six months and, still uneasy with the logistics, I had a slippery fear, not far from shame, that my period, bright red, tell-tale, was just waiting to seep into public notice. At the same time, I couldn't see why a bunch of male rabbis bothered to concern themselves with something so personal and uncontrollable. I finally shrugged: It was my own body's bat mitzvah, beyond the rabbis or me to command. Growing up, it was already clear, would involve judging which rules to respect, and which to disregard.

As an adult, I draw on both my father's rootedness and my mother's flexibility in Jewish observance. As a citizen of two families, I inhabited a microcosm of the diversity within Jewish belief and practice. On a more abstract level, I figured out that there was more than one way of doing something. I traveled between customs; no Authority had permanent sway over me. This was the compensating freedom that balanced the weight of keeping kashrut between my families.

I'm less strict with myself now about following my rules, more forgiving if I blur or cross old boundaries. But traces of my internal divisions remain. All this came to the surface when Warren—who grew up Unitarian—and I decided to get married. I had had two bat mitzvahs, but I was going to have only one wedding. Any time my two families were in the same place, it was a strange and stilted situation. But they had gotten through my college graduation and, quite recently, my medical school graduation, with civility, if not ease. The wedding celebrations, though, would take place at an isolated mountain retreat over a whole weekend. I realized I was fretting about each family seeing me joking or being close to the other side, displaying a hidden "me" that didn't belong to them.

As we did our planning, we found ourselves spending much of our energy balancing the expectations of my two Jewish families. This recapitulated all the efforts I had put forth for years protecting my parents from each other, and, at bottom, protecting myself. It was time, I decided, for us to make our wedding feel our own. Weren't we planning to have a service Saturday morning? Abba and Muriel asked. Actually, we'd been picturing a hike. Would we provide kippot? Yes, but we decided we wouldn't pass them around; we'd leave them in a basket and welcome people to wear them if they wished.

The weekend arrived. The whole family converged for Friday night dinner, tightly wound at first, then unfolding into relaxation. My cousins (on my step-Dad's side) got everyone singing *zmirot* after the meal. Later that night I found my two sisters and a brother up in the retreat's tree-house desperately practicing their Torah portions for the next morning. The next day was overcast and chilly. A family friend and rabbi, wearing my borrowed socks, led the Shabbat morning service under a tent on the dance floor. My Abba's family sat up front. My Mom and step-Dad sat at the back for a while, then drifted away to play croquet with my nephews on the lawn. Both dads wound up in the same car when we all drove up the mountain for a hike after lunch, and made the trip without mishap.

The officiating rabbi started off the ketubah-signing by having all of the parents and Warren and me hold my gauzy shawl, lifting it up and down three times as a kind of handshake, an egalitarian version of the traditional custom signaling agreement. One of my uncles (on Abba's side) passed around the basket of kippot after all; nobody minded. All my parents and my Saba squeezed under one side of the chuppah; Warren's parents were on the other side. Our brothers and sisters held the poles. After the blessings, the rings, the smashed glass, the kiss, everyone clapped and danced and ate together. There aren't too many pictures with all my parents in the same frame, but everyone looks very happy.

Shala Erlich is a physician and writer who lives in Seattle with her husband and one-year-old daughter.

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ILLUSTRATION BY FLASH ROSENBERG

Bringing Parents Together in

A "Happy" Divorce

by Ilana Kramer

I am a wildfire of curls and freckles, sitting in the backseat of my mother's broken-down station wagon. We are parked by the side of the road heading east, somewhere between California and New Jersey, and all I know is that I am three years old and on a terrific adventure. I watch as one of our tires bounds down a ravine, a skittish jackrabbit. Heat and fumes are rising from our hood, making the skyline tremble ahead. My sister, two years my senior and already in charge, is sitting in the front seat.

My mother is outside the car, frantic; she is looking for a spare she knows she doesn't have, but she is looking just the same. She and my father have just divorced, and now she has two daughters to raise and a car to push to the other side of the country.

Five years later, the chaos has subsided in a rare and curious way. I am on a family vacation at Universal Studios with my mom, my sister, and my dad. My sister and I are biting the bottoms of sugar cones and sucking out the soft ice cream. We are all waiting on line for an Alfred Hitchcock ride, when the attendant asks for a male participant. My mom immediately volunteers my father. Twenty minutes later my father stands on stage wide-eyed in a dress, playing the mother's role in "Psycho." When he's asked to introduce his family, we proudly stand up from the audience and wave. To onlookers in the park, we might look like your typical nuclear family, but if someone asked me for the low-down, I would have to explain I come from a happy divorce.

Growing up, my divorced family was unusual. My parents made a decision to make our family still act as a "family." While my friends in "intact" families hung out with both parents, and my friends of divorce had strict separate time with each parent, we fell into an uncharted no-man's land. Since my two parents lived with an entire country dividing them, this resulted in a lot of family vacations. My mother and father planned lobster dinners in Connecticut, swimming with dolphins in Key West, skiing in the Catskills, and endless Amtrak trips to Florida to my paternal grandparents. With my mom, sister, and me all in a king-sized bed in one hotel room and my dad snoring next door in another, I felt my family all around me. Despite my having no recollection of their mar-

riage together, I have a lot of memories of my parents, well, together. And our arrangement didn't end when my mother remarried.

Once we became a blended family, my dad would not only call on the phone for my sister, mom, and me, but would often ask to speak to his "husband-in-law,"my step-dad. They would chat about business, cars, and exchange jokes. One Thanksgiving on the East Coast, my father and step-dad took my sister, step-siblings, and me to the Macy's parade in New York City. When my dad got remarried, during my first year of college, his new wife became yet another addition to the family. I remember my dad and step-mom staying at our home in New Jersey (with my mom and step-dad); in the mornings, we would all swarm around the table like fruit flies for lox-and-bagel breakfasts.

My college graduation last spring was the real clincher.

My college graduation this past spring was the real clincher. There was an option for parents to stay in the college dormitories, so my mother secured two rooms next door to each other. While friends maneuvered social plans to minimize their divorced parents' interactions, my four parents were coordinating theirs. My mom and step-mom were fussing over hors d'oevres parties between the two rooms, while my step-dad helped my father reconfigure the single dorm beds in his room to make up a larger one. Sunday morning, when I checked in with all of my parents in the dorm, I saw my step-dad watching a baseball game and my dad writing out bills at a study table, tufts of white hair flying out behind each ear and in one of his striped long t-shirts that my mother called his "nightgowns." My mom and step-mother were kibbitzing, making fun of my father together.

Walking out of the elevator, my family memories hit me like flashcards turning over: the time we drove in my grandparents' car in Florida, my grandpa stubborn, lost, and nearly deaf in the front seat, my mom and dad laughing hysterically in the back; or the time my mom threw pillows at my dad, hollering to him, "I hate men!" after an especially bad date. I think of my family holding hands, walking in to the song "We are Family!" at the reception after my bat mitzvah. And then I think back to my father taking me to my JCC nursery school classroom to say goodbye to my friends before my post-divorce journey east. I remember my father was a giant then, and I reached my hand up to hold his thick fingers and watch his peppery moustache, and I felt small and uncertain. Are all these memories, then, what comprise my definition of a happy divorce?

I know I'm simplifying a complex process. Every moment didn't sparkle with Brady-Bunch zing. I missed my father at soccer games and summer school plays. On vacations, when both parents tucked me into bed, I felt a pinch of that childhood gingerbread dream that maybe, just maybe my parents would fall back in love. And I imagine that in my own absorbed and eager youth, it was difficult in quiet ways for them both, especially my mother, the sensitive one who single-handedly raised my sister and me. But I believe my parents sustained our family unit in a unique and inventive way.

When I ask my father about it, he remembers how difficult it was when the divorce first happened. Apparently it never occurred to him that by separating from my mother he might live 3,000 miles away from his children. He feared we wouldn't remain close. That didn't happen. When I questioned my parents recently, he had great memories of fun times with my sister and me. On winter break from college, the three of us driving down the Baja peninsula in Mexico to drink pina coladas and set off fireworks ("Girls, don't tell your mother"). The time he helped me catch a six-foot sailfish. Or how my dad would give us the same lecture at the beginning of every summer to Be Nice to his long-term girlfriend ("She loves you very much, girls"). Meanwhile, we plotted like devilish twins, buying whoopee cushions and black soap, all for a woman who, in truth, did appear to love us even though we seemed to need to play tricks on her to keep solidarity with our mother. In a way, while my mother dealt with the less-glamorous tasks of raising us during the school year, my father was able to reap the benefits of having smart, well-adjusted little daughters fly out to him every summer.

Perhaps it was because my parents had a great expanse of geography between them that helped to cool the landscape of hostility inherent in divorce. Maybe it was that they divorced when I was an infant, and neither remarried until I was a teen, enabling them to free up time for vacations. Or maybe, by living with distance between them, my sister and I could easily adopt the lifestyle and values of my mother, which may have conflicted with my father's and caused confusion if we were all located in the same town. Whatever the case, my parents shared a love for large *mishpocha* gatherings and—most importantly—for their children. When my mom calls me now in Manhattan for Saturday morning "Plan Ahead" lectures or my dad calls late at night to mimic impressions of my mother fretting, "*Your* father...," both calls make me sigh and laugh.

I shared my perspective of my parents' divorce with my mother the other evening in a phone call. Turns out that *her* reality was less sugar-coated than I'd perceived it. In interest of full disclosure, I share with you the e-mail I got the next morning from my Mom:

Lani...

Was thinking about our conversation...I guess it changed your idea of a "happy" divorce a little and I'm sorry, but the truth is that no divorce is painless or easy. I'm glad your perception of it was happy. That shows that despite my stress, you still perceived things between Dad and me as not too bad. Guess that was good for your development.
Divorced people go through the same stages as grief/loss people do: shock, denial, anger,

sadness, and finally resolution. It can take many years to get through, particularly if one person is at a financial disadvantage. Also it's a loss of dreams and hopes. When you marry you think it is forever, and then it's not. The way I answered you last night was purely honest, and maybe you are now old enough to hear the truth. When I was a single-parent, I was in survival mode, both financially and emotionally. I sometimes acted in ways that were not always sincere, but I did it to survive. When I met your stepfather, some of the survival mode left, and then it didn't matter. Does this all make sense to a 22-year old? Don't know. Well, you asked.

Again, let me know your plans for Friday. I have a 3 pm. nail appt. but will be done by 4.

Love, Mom

A Guide for the Perplexed

Ilana Kramer's mother, Deena Kramer Newman, a parent of two daughters and two step-children, a school counselor, divorce mediator, and parent educator, has some suggestions for parents on what children facing divorce really need:

- Create opportunities for contact with all relatives that the kids have been close to, including them in graduations, bar/bat mitzvahs, holidays, and casual visits. The Jewish calendar provides plenty of possibilities. While each situation is unique, most children of divorce wish for amiable relations with both parents, and don't want to lose a sense of "family."
- Try to be sensitive to the child's need to love both parents. This may sound trite, but many parents in their anger about the divorce don't realize that their child experiences loss too, and may even be in mourning.
- Don't ask too many questions about the other parent, but try to allow the child to express any frustrations without feeling you have to "fix" things. Let children work out visitation glitches directly with each parent as they get older and their own activities become more important.
- Be honest about financial limitations without wallowing in them.
- Try to laugh and have fun together. These are the memories that fill up the mental or actual family scrapbook children take with them into adulthood.

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Poet Marcia Falk spotlights a noted Israeli poet whose surprisingly sensual lyrics we can finally read in English.

HAYIM GOLDGRABER

Translating Zelda

by Marcia Falk

Translation is an art of intimacy—even passion—but the story of my engagement with Zelda's poetry had a less than romantic beginning. It was early 1974; I was living in Jerusalem on a grant to complete my doctoral thesis, a new translation of the biblical Song of Songs. But the Yom Kippur war, which had erupted in Israel a few months earlier, had put the country into turmoil; all resources, including academic ones, were at an ebb. By the time the almond trees were blossoming in the countryside and the strawberries were tumbling from the greengrocers' shelves, I found myself no longer able to make ends meet. And so, when I was approached by the editor of the international literary journal *Ariel* to translate the poems of an ultra-Orthodox Jewish woman known to her readers simply as Zelda (and not yet known to me at all), I did not stop to consider whether I would like these poems—and certainly not whether I would feel close enough to them to give them a new life in English. I accepted the commission and paid my rent the same day.

Up until then, I had assumed, with the poet Denise Levertov, that "I would never attempt to translate…poems that I could not at all imagine myself to have written." I believed then—as I still do today—that to make a text one's own one has to encounter it deeply, embracing its beauties and its flaws, ultimately giving oneself over to it entirely. It seemed to me at the time that such total surrender to the words of another required a fundamental affinity for that other's voice. Yet here I found myself translating poetry that I would not—could not—have written, and that I was not even sure I fully understood. Religious lyrics infused with a visionary wildness, Zelda's poems were utterly unique, not part of any poetic school in Hebrew letters. In both sensibility and form, they were not just unlike anything I might have written but distinct from anything I had read—as the poet herself was very different from anyone I had known.

Who was Zelda? The daughter and granddaughter of prominent Hasidic rabbis from the Habad dynasty, Zelda Schneurson was an only child, born in Russia in 1914. When she was twelve, she immigrated with her family to Palestine; shortly afterwards, both her father and grandfather died. In Jerusalem, where the family had settled, Zelda attended a school for religious girls and later a teachers' college. It was during her years at the college that she began to write and publish poetry.

At the age of eighteen Zelda moved with her mother to Tel Aviv, where she took private painting lessons and befriended other young artists. When her mother remarried and relocated to Haifa in 1933, Zelda once again accompanied her. In Haifa she developed a love for the landscape of Mount Carmel, to which she paid homage in many poems.

Zelda left her mother's home for the first and only time in 1935, to pursue her dream of studying painting at the Bezalel Art Academy in Jerusalem. She worked as a housepainter to earn money, but jobs were scarce and she was unable to save enough for tuition. When her mother became ill, she returned to Haifa to care for her, never having had the chance to study art formally. She continued to paint on her own, however, and to write poetry and teach in an elementary school.

In the early 1940s, after Zelda's mother was widowed again, the two women returned to Jerusalem, this time to stay. They settled in a small, dilapidated, ground-floor apartment in the religiously mixed neighborhood of Kerem Avraham

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(which later became part of Geulah), where Zelda taught school until 1950. That year, at age thirty-six, she married Hayim Aryeh Mishkovsky, and the couple made their home with Zelda's mother in the Kerem Avraham flat. It was there that Zelda ministered to her mother until her death in 1965 and also cared for Hayim, who became ill shortly after their marriage.

Once married, Zelda gave up teaching and began writing more prolifically and intensely. Hayim encouraged her to publish, and in 1967 her first book of poems, *P'nai* (Leisure), was released to great acclaim. It was dedicated to her father and mother and contained many poems about them and about her childhood. Her second book, *Hakarmel ha'i-nir'eh* (The Invisible Carmel), was published shortly after Hayim died, in 1971, and was dedicated to him. It was to be followed by four more volumes, each of them a critical and popular success: *Al tirhak* (Be Not Far, 1974), *Halo har halo esh* (Surely a Mountain, Surely Fire, 1977), *Hashoni hamarhiv* (The Spectacular Difference, 1981), and *Shenivd'lu mikol merhak* (Beyond All Distance, 1984). Hayim's death was devastating to Zelda, and the later books include many poems to him, giving voice to the deep sorrow and grief that remained with her until the end of her life. Especially poignant are the lyrics in which she calls out to her beloved across a chasm of silence to reach him in "the hidden world."

Five years after she was widowed, Zelda left Geulah, which had become increasingly insular, and moved to a street that bordered the Orthodox area known as Sha'arey Hesed and the religiously mixed neighborhood of Rehaviah. Situated at the boundary between two worlds, Zelda's new location was more open to the many nonreligious friends who were among her frequent guests. The change proved felicitous in another way as well: the new apartment let in more daylight, which, as the poems reveal, was a healing presence for her.

I was struck at once by the emotional power and density of her poems.

Zelda and Hayim had no children, but after Hayim's death Zelda began taking in boarders—young women, often students, whom she treated like daughters. She was extremely devoted to these companions, as they were to her, and she supported them economically and in many other ways, even providing them with wedding celebrations. During her last years, when she suffered from cancer, she was surrounded by these women and their families, and by her many other friends. Her final book, completed not long before her death in 1984, was dedicated "to the friends of my soul."

Although she lived her entire life within the strictures of ultra-Orthodoxy—dressing modestly and, once married, donning a wig—Zelda's admirers came from many corners of the heterogeneous (and predominantly secular) Israeli society. Her six books of mystical-religious verse were all bestsellers, meriting multiple reprintings and garnering numerous literary awards, including the prestigious Bialik and Brenner Prizes. Kibbutzniks, yeshiva students, academics, and soldiers—people of all ages, religious orientations, and political persuasions—were among her avid fans. As the popularity of her poetry grew, visitors flocked to her doorstep; her photograph appeared often in the newspapers; the words of her poems were set to music and sung. Naturally reserved and daunted by publicity, Zelda was an unlikely candidate for Israeli folk hero. Nonetheless, she emerged from the circumscribed world of her fathers and mothers to become a national phenomenon.

I, too, eventually became one of Zelda's admirers, though I could not have predicted that in the beginning. The first time I opened a book of her poems, I was struck at once by their emotional power and their density; I was drawn to the work but not always sure what to make of it. One of the things I noticed right away, and which became a source of fascination and puzzlement to me, was the abundance of seemingly symbolic figures that populated these poems. I am not speaking here of Zelda's frequent borrowings from classical Jewish texts—biblical, talmudic, midrashic, liturgical, kabbalistic, and Hasidic—which are accessible to readers familiar with Jewish sources. I refer, rather, to images that seem drawn from elsewhere, elements of the natural world such as the *strange plant*, the *golden fish*, the *enchanted bird*, the *black rose*, the *orange butterfly*—simple nouns matched with plain adjectives, some of them preceded by the definite article, lending them an archetypal air. Where exactly had these figures come from? From which realms of folklore, fable, fairy tale? And what were they doing here?

Eventually I would come to see that Zelda's poems, like the lyrics of Emily Dickinson and H.D., or the early poems of William Blake, contain a world of personal symbols—images at once evocatively sensual and suggestive of a deep spirituality—which have great resonance within the poet's oeuvre but which are not necessarily rooted outside of it.

In the early days of translating Zelda's poems, I was hungry for information, not just about their imagery but about every aspect of their contexts and origins. And I could not help but be curious about the woman who had written them. Finally, I emboldened myself and called Zelda on the phone, asking if I might visit her. She invited me to come to her home the next day.

I showed up at her doorstep in a knee-length skirt and a sleeveless blouse, a kerchief on my head. I had debated with myself about the skirt and blouse, knowing that the very religious do not approve of women revealing bare arms or legs; but the heat was oppressive that day, and I had heard that Zelda was tolerant by nature. I didn't give a thought to the kerchief, which looked, I later realized, like the traditional *tikhl* worn by some Orthodox married women to cover their hair when in public. I had worn it only as protection from the beating sun.

When Zelda opened her door to me, a bemused smile spread across her face. "You have a secular body," she commented wryly, "but a religious head." Her poems had not prepared me for her sense of humor. But then, little about

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Zelda's images recall those found in Emily Dickinson, H.D., or early Blake.

Zelda turned out to be predictable. In that first visit, I found her to be softspoken, unassuming, and even shy, but more than anything else, she was utterly original. I had never heard anyone speak quite the way she did, and I was almost in awe of her for this, although in truth her persona was anything but awesome. She smiled frequently, and when it was time for me to leave she invited me to return. I accepted and returned not once but many times, for although I could not help but be aware of the extreme differences between her world and mine, I felt truly welcome in her home.

Zelda and I were having tea and cookies in her living room the day I attempted to fulfill a promise I had made to the members of my poetry reading group. They were curious about one of her images—the golden fish—and I had agreed to ask her what she had meant by it. Obviously startled by my query, Zelda turned her eyes away from me and toward the windowsill. Pointing to a newly blossoming geranium, one of the many houseplants that filled her apartment with an ethereal green glow, she said, "See that plant in the window? It doesn't speak." She paused briefly before continuing, "Is it any less a miracle than a plant that speaks?"

Then she grew silent, and I waited for what felt like long minutes until she turned back to me. "Why," she asked, looking at me with an expression of genuine bafflement, "do people always seek what is complicated? I always intend the simple. By 'golden fish' I meant a golden fish."

Alas, much of what Zelda claims as simple can give her readers pause, and certain characteristics of the Hebrew language only increase the difficulties. Hebrew offers no distinction between uppercase and lowercase letters, leaving punctuation to be the main orthographic indicator of sentence structure, yet Zelda largely avoids punctuating her poems. And parts of speech are fungible in Hebrew as they are not in English, allowing for multiple possibilities of meaning; for example, the words *ahuv noshev* in one of her poems can mean "breathing (literally, blowing) lover" or "beloved breather" or even "beloved, breathing"—a double adjective modifying the preceding noun. In Zelda's verse, it is often difficult to determine which of several meanings she is after—though the translator, of course, is often forced to choose only one.

To my own surprise, I ended up translating Zelda more literally than I have translated other poets. I simply felt that a higher degree of literalness was demanded in order to ensure that the strangeness of her lines not be diluted. For those who may suspect that I am exaggerating the oddness of Zelda's idiom, I offer the words of Israeli novelist and essayist Amos Oz, once Zelda's adoring second-grade pupil. In a recent memoir, Oz described Zelda's language this way:

> *A strange, anarchic Hebrew, a Hebrew belonging to stories of the pious and to Hasidic tales and folk parables, a Hebrew overflowing with Yiddish, violating every rule, mixing feminine with masculine, present with past, noun with adjective—a sloppy, even muddled Hebrew. But what vitality there was in these stories! When a story was about snow, it seemed written in words of snow. And when it was about fires, the words themselves burned. And what strange, hypnotic sweetness there was in her tales about all kinds of miracles! As though the writer dipped the letters in wine: the words went spinning in the mouth.*

And this, too, from Oz's pen:

> *I loved the way Teacher Zelda placed word next to word. Sometimes she placed one ordinary, everyday word next to another, equally routine and common, and suddenly, in their being joined, from the mere fact of their being side by side, two completely ordinary words unaccustomed to standing next to each other—it was as though suddenly an electric current ran between them, exciting my spirit, which sought the wonders of words.*

Yes—if we read poetry to encounter wonder, Zelda's words give us more than we could hope for; if the experience catches us off guard, that is simply part of the adventure. These are poems that take us places, take us away; poems that go to the edge—and then some. And yet they are never put-ons, never show-offs, and, above all, never artificial. They seem not to have been "made" but to have been born whole and delivered to us in a single breath. They contain no guile, no trickery, no cleverness for its own sake. They are, in short, the real thing—which surely explains, at least in part, why they have had such a profound impact on their native audience, an impact that is arguably as great as that of any Hebrew poetry in the latter half of the twentieth century.

Marcia Falk's last book was *The Book of Blessings*, a groundbreaking Hebrew-English prayer book written from a nonhierarchical, gender-inclusive perspective. Her now-classic translation of *The Song of Songs* will be published in a new edition by University Press of New England/Brandeis University Press in the fall of 2004. Learn more about her books, artwork, and programs at www.marciafalk.com.

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Here is a selection of Zelda's poems translated by Marcia Falk from her forthcoming book, *The Spectacular Difference: Selected Poems of Zelda* (HUC Press, 2004).

Heavy Silence

Death will take the spectacular difference
between fire and water
and cast it to the abyss.

Heavy silence
will crouch like a bull
on the names we have given
the birds of the sky
and the beasts of the field,
the evening skies,
the vast distances in space,
and things hidden from the eye.

Heavy silence will crouch like a bull
on all the words.
And it will be as hard for me to part
from the names of things
as from the things themselves.

O Knower of Mysteries,
help me understand
what to ask for
on the final day.

Strange Plant

At midnight, a candle glowed
in the heart
of a blood-red flower.
At midnight, on the grief
of my face,
a strange plant's celebration
streamed like gold.

When Yearnings

When yearnings dishevel
her light hair,
she whispers to them,
"Stop.
You have burdened me.
I am betrothed
to a nocturnal river
more awesome than the sea,
the river called compassion."

Uncombed Hair

A single word
shattered all the lights,
a single word
turned a lit street
into a dark forest.
The angel who revealed himself to Hagar
came to the terrible forest,
came to the end of the world
to touch her hand.
But she fled from the angel
as from a mirage,
crying,
"You don't exist, you don't exist,
you don't exist—
don't tempt me with empty secrets."

A fountain rushed toward her,
shimmering with water,
bearing branches and leaves,
but she, completely soaked, cried,
"My poor soul,
delusions again!"

Little sister with uncombed hair,
do not flee from the sound of angels.
Your life hums with yearning,
your flesh is not a fable,
and the red-haired man,
friend of the sun,
knows you are summer,
knows you are a fruit-bearing tree.

The Orange Butterfly

When the orange butterfly wends its way
through a river of colors and scents
toward its flower-mate, and clings
as though this flower were the star
of its secret self—
an inexplicable clamor of hope
rises in every heart.

And when that beautiful flutterer
abandons the weary petals
and vanishes in space,
the lonely moment wakens in the world,
a soul vanishes in infinity.

In the Hospital

1. When a horse is sold in the marketplace

When a horse is sold in the marketplace,
no one asks the horse-soul
if it will allow a strange hand
to open the horse's mouth,
to touch its limbs.
They set my shamed flesh
before the dragon of science
without asking my soul.

Ten heads of the lofty dragon
observed my misery
without asking my soul.

2. Beyond the wall, a sick old woman

In her broken, tortured voice—
no poison,
no wail of abandonment.
Even in a moment of filth, of revulsion,
she weeps
the way a child weeps for mama,
without fear of mockery or scorn.
In the evening, a thin laugh
flies toward me from her room—
a memory of another existence.
And suddenly a lonely growl in the dark—
her terror of sleeping
and of waking.

At dawn, once again the old woman
is quiet as a wilting flower.
The nurse's smile comforts her.
This old woman has not,
out of anger,
turned away from people
or from God.
Like her, my mother
was faithful to heaven
while in the valley of the shadow of death.
But my mother was filled with dread.

3. You are mistaken

You are mistaken—
even in death's cradle
the fog did not dissolve.
Even when the end was near,
terrifyingly near,
I was miles and miles away
from the riddle.

4. My soul peered through the lattices

For Ruti Freudiger

My soul peered through the lattices
within the desolation and devastation
of my illness.
From its captivity, it called
to Was-Is-Will Be.
In the dark, it whispered,
"In Your hands, I place
my spirit, my pain,
my honor, my life, my death."

5. When the woman

When the brown-faced woman—
who was, at that moment,
polishing the floor—
heard the doctor's words,
she said to me,
"I will pray for you."
A sudden, new friend
said to me,
"I will pray for you."

Pressed flower images from *The Afterlife of Flowers*, copyright ©1999 by Janie Feldman Gross. Her floral images will be featured in the upcoming Paramount film "The Stepford Wives." Janie Gross teaches flower pressing at Longwood Gardens in Kennett Square, PA, and has created the first pressed flower pillow collection. To learn more visit www.janiegross.com

Separate and Equal?

by Elizabeth A. Richman

I've always considered myself a Jewish feminist. Always. So I don't know why last summer's discussion wasn't easy for me. Should have been. Open and shut. Case closed. I wanted to be on the side of equality, but I wasn't sure which side that was.

A progressive Jewish institution I love dearly, which has always been passionately committed to radical egalitarianism, has opened up a thorny question: Should the organization allow *mechitzah* (gender-separate and non-egalitarian) and single-sex prayer services during its several-times-yearly gatherings?

This organization was founded 25 years ago, when there were still extremely limited ritual roles for Jewish women. Until the Jewish feminist movement of the 1970s pressed for women's full participation in prayer and ritual, women in Orthodox and Conservative settings in particular were excluded from much of public Jewish life. Ever since, this organization's officially sponsored prayer options have ranged from traditional to feminist to experimental. But regardless of style, each and every one of these services has been egalitarian and open to anyone of any gender.

Now the topic has been re-opened and the old rule is under fire. Not for a *vote,* as the organization has been careful to point out, but simply for discussion, to see where the community stands on the issue. Why? Because of requests from a younger generation, Jews in their 20s and 30s, like me, who were not present when the original policy outlawing the separation of women and men at prayer was established.

The twenty- and thirty-somethings in favor of considering the option of gender-separate prayer make two arguments. First, they contend that non-egalitarian minyanim should be offered in the spirit of pluralism and in a bid to attract more traditional Jews who may be interested in the organization but uncomfortable praying in egalitarian settings. Second, they argue that prohibiting single-gender minyanim (and, more particularly, women's minyanim) is in itself a form of the exclusivity that the organization had tried to prevent with its original policy. In the eyes of many younger Jews, the debate is less about the old struggle against patriarchy, but rather about women's—and all Jews'—rights to pray as they wish.

The greatest philosophical divide is between Jews of my generation and those of my parents' generation (those in their 50s and older). The issue has brought to the fore some key differences between their varying views of feminism, with some younger Jews feeling secure enough in their equality to reimbrace traditional practices.

At last summer's meeting, most of those who spoke in favor of allowing non-egalitarian and single-gender prayer services were much younger than those who opposed the idea.

I had wanted to stand up and speak. But I wasn't sure what to say. As much as I wanted to cast my lot with all the folks in the room who helped found this organization that I care for so much, I couldn't. To me, the issue was not just a matter of feminism and egalitarianism; it was a more complicated question. Among other things, it was a question of pluralism. Could we, a community that feels secure in its inclusivity and egalitarianism, open its arms to embrace those who don't? Should we? Are we missing an opportunity to include liberal Modern Orthodox Jews and feminists? Or would the explicit approval of non-egalitarian Judaism be harmful to our institutional culture and our very nature as an organization dedicated to an all-encompassing egalitarianism?

Should feminists permit women and men to pray apart?

My generation of non-Orthodox Jews seems to mix much more freely with Orthodox and traditional Jews than our parents did. We are, by and large, a group for whom traditional, though egalitarian, Jewish living is making a comeback. To exclude Orthodox Jews would be to exclude some of our friends, teachers, and acquaintances. But I couldn't force myself to stand up and say any of this. I felt a tremendous amount of shame, as though I were betraying both my feminist principles and the pioneers in the room who had fought for my right to be counted.

I am confused, and I am upset that I am confused. A true feminist, I think, wouldn't be confused.

A few weeks later, I attended with my mother a panel on the future of Jewish feminism. The panelists were heavy hitters: scholar Judith Plaskow, activist Letty Cottin Pogrebin, and Devorah Zlochower, my beloved Talmud teacher at the Drisha Institute for Jewish Education.

Judith Plaskow opened the session. She was concerned about what she considered to be "backsliding" on feminist

principles in the Jewish community. To my surprise, she cited the summer's discussion on gender-separate prayer as a prominent sign of this backsliding.

I was shaken.

When the moderator called for questions, I asked Plaskow why she viewed the discussion so clearly as evidence of backsliding rather than as a more nuanced phenomenon. One of her answers was that she has observed the changes wrought in a liberal congregation that recently added a non-egalitarian prayer option. Younger girls who previously wore tallitot or participated in services were now taking off their tallitot and refusing leadership roles because it was "wrong."

This worried me. This result was indeed backsliding, and it was a frightening, unacceptable outcome of an attempt to be inclusive.

After the session ended, my mother and I continued the conversation. It turned out that she, like Plaskow, saw the matter in a different light. Minyanim where women and men prayed separately were a step backward. Period.

To illustrate her point, she told a story. My mother graduated from middle school in 1961. With the highest GPA in her class, she was slated to be the valedictory speaker at graduation. Apparently, this honor had never before fallen to a girl. The school principal decided that making my mother valedictorian was a waste. There was no official recourse, nor did my grandmother choose to challenge the ruling. My mother cried all day, but to no avail. As my mother said, "It was 1961. Nobody really thought there was anything wrong with that. Everyone felt bad for me, but no one was jumping up and down about it."

That same year, my mother was also supposed to receive a graduation award for the highest achievement in her cooking class. However, her (Jewish) cooking teacher decided that it would be bad for public relations if the sole Jewish girl in a predominantly Italian school won the award. Again my mother was informed that she would not be receiving the recognition she deserved.

This time, however, my grandmother decided that it was a matter of anti-Semitism, not mere sex discrimination. A formidable woman when provoked, my grandmother fought, and in the end my mother received the award. My mother notes dryly that "It was a hell of a year."

My mother had learned that being discriminated against because one was Jewish was not acceptable. Being passed over because one was female, however, was perfectly acceptable. My mother concluded her story by noting that, "this is part of the fiber and fabric of what makes people feminists. We lived through experiences like this."

So maybe that's part of the answer to the different generational takes on the egalitarian question. Most of my generation, or at least the non-Orthodox members of my generation, *haven't* lived through experiences like that. My 20- and 30-something friends came of age in an era of female valedictorians, co-ed Ivy League universities, and more accessible career paths for women. Similarly, many of us have never known a time when there wasn't a synagogue somewhere, even if it wasn't our own, where we felt comfortable and could read from the Torah, lead services, or be on the *bimah*.

To be fair, I am the product of a very specific time, place, and set of privileges. I am a white, middle-class, Ivy League graduate. I move in a community of highly-educated Jews who are committed to traditional-ish observance in modern-ish ways. Yet we are committed to an egalitarian understanding of Judaism and are painfully aware that gender (and other) bias is still present in all facets of our lives.

However, such bias has become more subtle since 1961, and in many ways all the more insidious for its subtlety. Unlike my mother, I can't point to a single example of explicit discrimination in my own life. I'm sure that this accounts for some of the differences in the way Jewish feminists of different generations view the issue of non-egalitarian prayer. To my mother's generation, such prayer groups are a clear threat to hard-fought-and-won gains for women's equality. To many of my generation, they are just one configuration in an array of choices laid out before us. It's not an option that most of us are likely to elect on a regular basis, but one we believe should be available to those who feel obligated to follow this form of prayer.

A large part of the younger generation's attitude toward gender-separate prayer options has also been shaped by the current dynamic of Jewish life on college campuses. In many places, collegiate Jewish life has a very different feel than in previous generations. At a number of big universities, all flavors of Jewish groups are housed in a single building. Conservative, Havurah, Orthodox, Reconstructionist, Reform and non-affiliated Jews gather together for learning, study breaks, and informal socializing. Friday nights at my university were a case in point. Though the different denominational groups prayed separately, we joined one another afterward for a rousing Shabbat dinner, where a different student (female or male) recited Kiddush each week.

Thus there is a whole generation of young Jews who now have friends and acquaintances across the denominational spectrum.

I don't have a clear answer to the conflicting views on this issue, but I do find the question—and the personal experiences that underlie its disparate answers—fascinating. Our positions on this feminist issue seem indelibly shaped by our personal histories and the era in which we came to consciousness. ●

Elizabeth A. Richman works for the Eleemosynary Group in New York City, where she manages consulting projects for progressive nonprofit organizations.She is on the coordinating committee of the Park Slope minyan.

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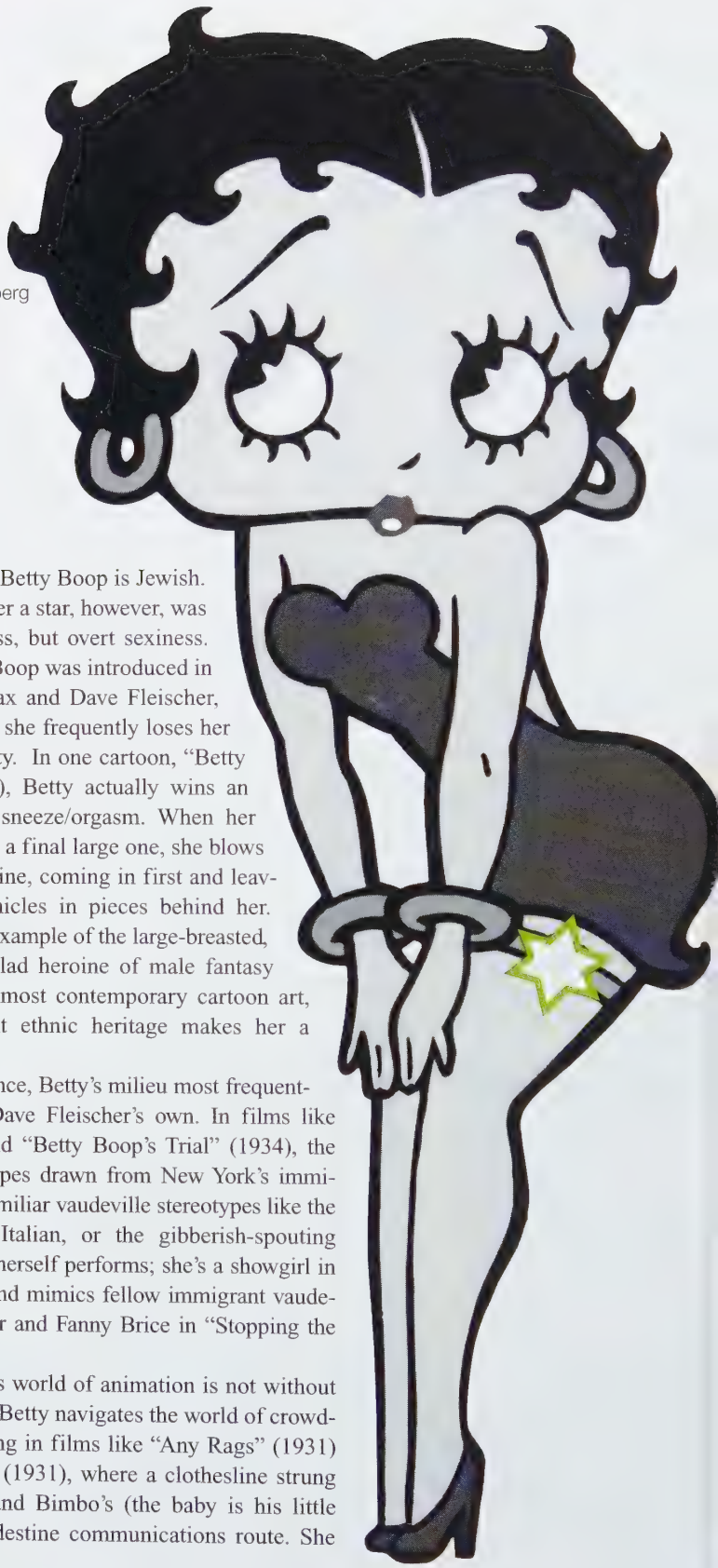
BETTY BOOP

WHO KNEW???

by Amelia S. Holberg



We're just beginning to learn the unexpurgated facts of Betty's bio.

Maybe there's a subliminal message for Jewish women in those Betty Boop tchotchkes that are everywhere now.

Yes. Of course Betty Boop is Jewish. What made her a star, however, was not Jewishness, but overt sexiness. When Betty Boop was introduced in 1930 by her creators, Max and Dave Fleischer, animation was for adults; she frequently loses her top and trades on sexuality. In one cartoon, "Betty Boop's Ker-choo" (1933), Betty actually wins an automobile race with a sneeze/orgasm. When her small sneezes give way to a final large one, she blows herself across the finish line, coming in first and leaving the male-piloted vehicles in pieces behind her. Clearly, Betty is an early example of the large-breasted, round-bottomed, barely-clad heroine of male fantasy that persists even in the most contemporary cartoon art, but her equally apparent ethnic heritage makes her a unique character.

From her first appearance, Betty's milieu most frequently resembled Max and Dave Fleischer's own. In films like "Mask-a-Raid" (1931) and "Betty Boop's Trial" (1934), the Fleischers spoof urban types drawn from New York's immigrant neighborhoods in familiar vaudeville stereotypes like the big-nosed, mustachioed Italian, or the gibberish-spouting Chinese. In others, Betty herself performs; she's a showgirl in "Silly Scandals" (1931) and mimics fellow immigrant vaudevillians Maurice Chevalier and Fanny Brice in "Stopping the Show" (1932).

Even the looking-glass world of animation is not without its dangers, however, and Betty navigates the world of crowded, derelict tenement living in films like "Any Rags" (1931) and "Minding the Baby" (1931), where a clothesline strung between her apartment and Bimbo's (the baby is his little brother) becomes a clandestine communications route. She

Betty Boop © King Features Syndicate, Inc./ Fleischer Studios Inc. TM Hearst Holdings, Inc./ Fleischer Studios Inc.

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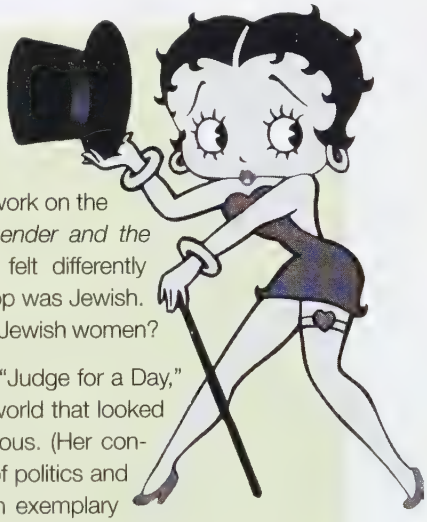
negotiates splashing mud, crowded buses, and rude neighbors as she tries to make her way to work in both "Judge for a Day" (1935) and "Betty Boop for President" (1932). She also successfully foils rape in films like "Barnacle Bill" (1930) and "Boop-Oop-A-Doop" (1932), and does what she can to earn a living in films like "Betty Boop's Big Boss" (1933) and "Betty Boop's Bizzy Bee" (1932). Urban audiences could empathize as Betty encountered both working-class immigrant challenges and the special problems that city life dealt up for women.

Betty Boop headlined the "Talkartoon" series that also leave little doubt as her Jewishness. Ragman Bimbo serenades Betty as she hangs out of her Lower East Side tenement window in "Any Rags"; Betty's native relatives in "Betty Boop's Bamboo Isle" (1932) greet Bimbo with a hearty "Shalom Aleichem!" before he carts her back to New York where she belongs. The Hebrew letters "kosher" pop up as a visual joke on a ham served to a patron sporting rabbinic features in "Dizzy Dishes" (1930), on a paddy wagon in "Big Boss" and on a thermometer popping out of Koko's peplum in "I Know What You Did, You Rascal, You" (1932). In "Stopping the Show," Betty imitates Fanny Brice performing as a Yiddish-accented Indian (later a Hollywood trope). Betty also encounters Yiddish-speaking characters including a fish in "SOS" (1933) and a kvelling worm in "Bum Bandit" (1931). Finally, Betty's Jewish parents are introduced in 1931's "Minnie the Moocher." The zaftig elder Boops exhort their skinny daughter to eat, but Betty runs away, stuck between the expectations of the old world and the new.

A sexy, confident, financially independent young woman, Betty is a prototype for an especially pleasant version of the "ghetto girl," known for her flamboyant modern clothing and for frequenting the cafes and dance halls of the Lower East Side. Real "ghetto girls" were suspected to be modern-day sirens concealing their real agenda—marriage—beneath a man-friendly, fun-loving exterior. In contrast, Betty's sexual modernism has few consequences for herself or her male costars. Betty Boop even combines her modern sensibilities with the more traditional Jewish role of woman as breadwinner, not only able to support her own extravagances but to provide them for others free of charge (as she does for Bimbo in "Mask-a-Raid," and for the entire city in "Betty Boop for President"). In a period that also saw a few Jewish women like Emma Goldman agitating for birth control and free love, Betty may have illustrated an ideal of consequence-free liberation for male and female audiences alike (though I suspect more so for the men). Betty was also not the only sexu-

SEX KITTEN OR ROLE MODEL?



Once, during a lecture on Betty Boop, scholar Riv-Ellen Prell, known for her work on the status of women in Judaism (*Fighting to Become Americans: Jews, Gender and the Anxiety of Assimilation*), remarked with a smile that she would have felt differently (implying: better) about being a Jewish women if she had known Betty Boop was Jewish. Is it possible that Betty Boop—with her short skirts and garter—is a positive role model for Jewish women?

In her favor, there are the cartoons that put Betty in control: "Betty Boop for President," "Judge for a Day," and "Betty Boop's Trial." Story lines in these films placed her in positions of power in a world that looked much like the real one: urban, complicated, dirty, and occasionally dangerous. (Her contemporaries, like Mickey Mouse and friends, existed in a world devoid of politics and the difficulties of real American life.) But weighing against Betty as an exemplary Jewish woman: her presidential platform advocating free jazz and cabarets, her frequent reliance on sex appeal to get what she wants, and the fact that her clearly Jewish parents are made distinctly unsympathetic. What's more, almost all of her early adventures involved getting in trouble because of a man, and her later ones (post-Hays Code) show her making less-than-wonderful decisions about her future , often necessitating a rescue by her post-Code boyfriend, the strapping Fearless Freddie.

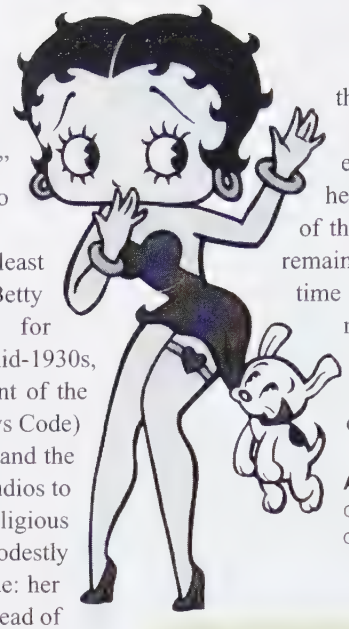
Still, through it all, Betty remains independent, single, and self-sufficient. She is clearly a male fantasy, animated to show off her "tits and ass," but like real Jewish women she exceeds her expected boundaries, performs roles unfamiliar for women of any creed, and does all this loudly and in front of millions. A glamorous, sexy, active Jewish woman who could be our grandmother—not such a bad ancestor after all.

—AH

(A version of this text appeared in *Entertaining America: Jews, Movies, and Broadcasting*, edited by J. Hoberman and Jeffrey Shandler. Princeton University Press, 2003.)

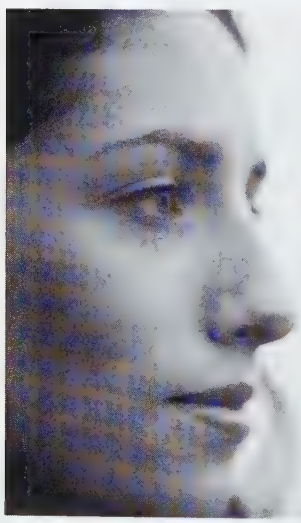
ally liberated urban type featured in the Fleischer series; films like "SOS" (1933), "Any Rags," and "A-Hunting We Will Go with Bimbo and Koko" (1932) present the studio's first animated star, Koko the Clown, as a gay character.

These progressive characters were doomed (at least until the present-day resurgence of interest in Betty Boop memorabilia). When audiences opted for Disney's child-friendly, clean suburbia in the mid-1930s, Betty was ill-suited to the challenge. Enforcement of the Motion Picture Production Code in 1934 (The Hays Code) put an end even to animated bosoms and garters, and the code's ban on negative ethnic material led most studios to conclude that nixing all identifiable ethnic or religious representations was the safest route. A more modestly drawn Betty is the most obvious result of the Code: her hemlines drop considerably, she wears blouses instead of a strapless top, and her trademark garter disappears. However, these new cartoons also eliminated nearly all of the ethnic markers evident in the earlier series: eventually, Betty (sometimes now without her trademark New York accent) moves to the roomy suburbs and Bimbo is replaced by the muscle-bound, golden-toned Fearless Freddie. In the final few years of the series, a less active Betty relinquishes screen time to the antics of puppy Pudgy and cute Little Jimmy or to the wacky inventions of eccentric Grampy. Betty Boop appeared in her final cartoon in 1939. A Jewish resident of the depression-era Lower East Side, Betty remains evidence of that specifically American time and place. In 1938, the Fleischer studio moved from New York to Miami; perhaps Betty wanted to retire where she could play mah-jongg with the rest of the girls.



Amelia S. Holberg is Assistant Professor of Media Studies at The Catholic University of America.

Most of these cartoons are available to buy or rent in a set of videos/dvds called **"Betty Boop: The Definitive Collection"** which was released in 1996. All of the films have been remastered for this collection, and the set includes an introduction by Max Fleischer's son, Richard Fleischer.



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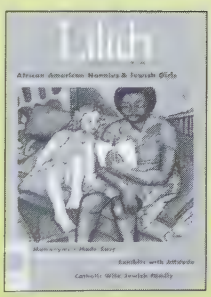

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The Guys in the Rabbi's Class

A short story by Susan Dworkin

My husband had a teacher in his later years, a rabbi who was much too Orthodox for most of us, but so sweet and sympathetic, so learned and easy to learn from, such a light to us Jewish goyim, that we followed him and loved him, especially my husband.

This rabbi—his name was Geduldig, Solomon Geduldig—had no pulpit but mainly taught Talmud, Torah and Ethics at Detroit State, sometimes at the Community College. Also he participated in political movements to relax the practices of the observant. He wanted women to be Orthodox rabbis. He wanted a friendlier reception for converts. He wanted everyone to go to a Jewish camp, even if it wasn't super-*frum*, and he showed up at USY and Ramah functions, at Young Judaea banquets and Habonim *kumsitzim*, bringing messages of solidarity from the small band of left-of-center Sabbath-keepers who actually shared his belief in Klal Yisrael, the unified Jewish people.

This offended so many other mainstream observant Jews that the rabbi received hate mail. He was a traitor, the letters said. A Spinoza. Go to hell, asshole.

Rabbi Geduldig was about 45—fifteen years younger than my husband. It's hard for me to tell you what he looked like because so much of his face was hidden behind a dense russet beard. Equally thick eyebrows obscured his eyes—but not their twinkle. He was very short. He had the look of a sweet-natured hairy dog who would never bark except to warn you of danger and would always lead your sheep safely home. His smile, ever-ready, even brightened the days of strangers just passing by. He had freckles. He wore a plain black kipah at all times, and rumpled suits that did not really fit him. His wife was said to be a scholar. She taught at a school for Orthodox girls, in Flint, I believe.

Rabbi Geduldig came to our Jewish Community Center in the suburbs as the so-called "Rabbi-in-Residence" and worked with our people there for several years. He taught Jewish history and ethics to the staff—the sports instructors, administrators, nursery school teachers and social workers who tended to the little kids, the old folks, the singles, the two gyms, the three pools, the many reading groups, classes, concerts, lectures, art shows, amateur theatricals and, of course, fund-raising. Many of the staff members did not like to be required to study Jewish history and ethics. They disliked the rabbi; did not feel they needed his guidance; said he acted "holier-than-thou." But in truth he *was* holier than they were, holier than all of us.

On weekday mornings, Rabbi Geduldig could often be seen in the halls of our spiffy new building. Sometimes he was wearing one of his *shmatah* suits; sometimes he was coming from the gym, wearing sweatpants and a T-shirt that said "I Love My Country but I Fear My Government." He moved with a slow shuffle. At any moment you could stop him, and he would beam his smile and schmooze a while and tell a joke and then go on his way. The jokes always had two punches. The first came quickly and you laughed. The second came later, when you were alone, about to turn out the lights for the night. Then, Rabbi Geduldig's joke would shine at you again like a little late show.

Hiya Rabbi.

Hello! How are you doing?

Actually not so terrific. I have a cold, I'm going home to eat chicken soup.

Well, you know what our ancestors said. When a Jew eats a chicken, one of them must be sick.

And I laughed because it was funny, but later that night, in my big house, waiting for my husband to come home from work, I thought of the poverty of our grandparents and their hunger.

Part of the rabbi's job as "Rabbi-in-Residence" was to make himself available to counsel the general JCC membership on a drop-in basis for several hours each day. A Herculean task, my husband said, laughing; a lesser man would not even dare to attempt it.

Intense young women came to him straight from their workout, their hair still damp from the shower, their shoulders still rippling with aches and twitches from lifting weights. Fierce business executives, coifed lawyers and accountants, the owners of successful enterprises, even sometimes physicians came to him in the day's odd hours, with an almost clandestine air, slipping into his cubbyhole office, turning off their cell phones. Hesitant. Deferential. As they approached our rabbi, they seemed to fly backwards through the spirit world and re-enter that murdered era when Jews had respect for their religious leaders, and they mutated, like lions transformed into mice by a time machine.

Have you got a minute, Rabbi? I don't want to disturb you. But the thing is...you see...I don't know what to do. Tell me. What should I do?

The classes that Rabbi Geduldig taught early in the morning to the older guys had a relatively great impact, for these were our *gvirim*, our big shots, men of substance and influence, and what they learned from the rabbi trickled down to the community at large as wealth is said to do.

I have not personally observed wealth trickling, despite its reputation for doing so. But I am absolutely sure that states of mind trickle down. Malaise trickles down; so does a sense of well being. And that was how it was with Rabbi Geduldig's class, the one my husband attended. A sense of brotherhood trickled down from that 7:00 AM gathering around the big table with its scattered bagels and paper cups of coffee, a feeling of *chaverschaft* like that which our grandparents shared with their fellow buttonhole makers or shirtwaist sewers or snow miners in Siberian prison camps. The guys in the class felt commitment, even love for one another as in days of old, and I warmed myself in their connection, I admit that: it felt wonderful.

There were maybe 20 guys in the class, ranging in age from 60 to 80. They were all pretty well off, but you can bet everybody knew who the richest guy was and who was the second richest. Some were board members of our JCC, big givers, builders of hospitals and nursing homes. A few of the guys were retired. Most, like my husband, still labored like horses, mortally engaged by that peculiar American pathology which requires a man to work himself to death to prove that he has lived a useful life.

Think, I used to say to him. The mortgage is paid up. The kids are set. You could stop working. If you stopped working, you could go to even more classes. You could study not just Genesis at the JCC but Modern American Literature at the Adult School. You could play volleyball, a regular game. You could hang out in the *schvitz* with Rabbi Geduldig himself and talk about the President and his advisors and make judgments about their wisdom, you could read the whole newspaper from beginning to end every single day. For god's sake, isn't it clearly time to stop working? Don't we have enough?

One or two women showed up at the class in a valiant display of uniqueness, but I myself—though tempted by my husband's excitement—never attended. I wanted to let him have his boy's club. I knew how much it meant to him. I could see his delight in the other guys, his pleasure in the male bastion. It renewed him. Reminded him of those good old times before there were women everywhere, when the patriarchy still had its privileges, when the guys were still all guys. Feeling secure in my feminist achievements, I had broken through my own ideology to a new empathy with my husband's need to study with men. Had I not been saved as a young girl by being sent to study at a college that was all by and for women? Loving him, I gladly sent him off to splash in his macho puddle, and his reports of the goings on in Rabbi Geduldig's class made second breakfast on Thursday mornings a weekly delight.

It seemed to me from my husband's reports that most of the guys in the class were chiefly interested in their own importance. I say that without blaming them in the least; we all get that way with age. A sense of their own importance was the reward these guys received for a lifetime of taking care. They had taken care of everybody for forty years, the span of a full generation, time to wander in the desert and be found. They had put children and grandchildren through school and graduate

I supported my husband in every aspect of his self-importance...

school, made weddings, bedecked wives, bought houses, cars, insurance, mutual funds. They had greased the wheels of great causes, and now they got to tell it. *I endowed this, I built that, I'm on this board, that committee, I gave this much last year and will give so much this year.* Self-importance. The viagara of the soul.

I supported my husband in every aspect of his self-importance. I do to this day. That's your father's chair, don't sit there, I say. Don't sit at his desk. That was *his* desk.

When did I stop insisting on my share, claiming my contribution? When did I give up all that and decide to just go along, as my mother and my grandmother had done before me?

I remember once waiting on line at the jewelry repair counter of a department store. A man and his wife were ahead of me. They were black people, very well dressed and refined-looking. Here is my mother's locket, the man said, a

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gift from my father. It's gold. The chain is broken. I want it repaired so that my wife can wear it.

The husband was enjoying every minute of this errand. Soon he would put his mother's gold locket around his wife's neck, a ceremonial high. The wife was smiling. Restrained, proud smile.

The young girl waiting on them looks at the chain and the priceless locket, and she says: But the thing is, sir, this chain isn't gold, and the locket isn't either, they're just sort of gold-colored metal, and it wouldn't really be worth your while to fix the chain since you could have a whole new chain for the price of the repair.

She's a kid, what the hell does know? She has no idea why the wife of this man is now screaming at her: *You stupid idiot! Can't you see that chain and that locket are gold, solid gold?! Now fix them! Just fix them!* And her husband closes his eye and tilts himself backwards as though to lie down in the grave with his mother and berate her for pretending to believe that the stuff his father gave her was gold and allowing her son to truly believe what she only pretended to believe and thus triggering this awful humiliation, this loss of self-importance, and the wife is ready to throttle the salesgirl for causing her husband so much pain, and the poor salesgirl, who was just trying to be helpful, begins to cry.

The guys in the class gave a dinner for Rabbi Geduldig at the end of the year in the spring after Yom HaShoah. It was at a kosher restaurant. Wives were invited. The rabbi's wife too. My friend Martha and I, eager to get to know her, sat as close to her as we could. My husband and Martha's husband Louis sat on either side of the rabbi down at the opposite end of the table.

Mrs. Geduldig looked much older than we do, although I know for sure she was much younger. She was fat and shapeless. Her hands were haggard. She wore not a stylish wig but a plain scarf over her gray hair, and her black eyes took us all in,

"I never thought I had anything to learn from the condition of women," Louis said.

she knew us instantly. I could see her spotting the richest guy in the class—heir to a windshield wiper fortune, I believe—and the second richest, a big developer, very nice—and putting all the guys together with the stories Rabbi Geduldig had told her about them and then mentally figuring which of us went with which guy.

She stared at the fancy gold rings on the fingers of my friend Martha, then caught me seeing her staring, and looked away.

After a brief encounter with the food itself, the speeches began. Each of the students stood up to say his piece.

A retired manufacturer described his yeshiva background, the stupid vicious teacher, the ruler slapping *thwack!* on the back of his head and the palm of his hand. He said: "In Rabbi Geduldig's class, I discovered that learning Torah didn't have to be an oppression. It could be a wonderful conversation, with mutual respect, with jokes. I loved the joke whose punch line was 'Lenin is in Poland.' I loved going home and telling my wife the jokes. I wish to thank the rabbi for making me laugh about being a Jew."

Louis, Martha's husband, rose to speak. He's a good guy, but you can see how he might be intimidating in business, with his cold blue eyes and snow white hair, Donahue Clinton hair. Before he spoke, he screwed up his thin lips, thinking. Martha looked away. She's a close friend of mine. I knew she could not imagine after all these years that she would hear something new from Louis. She twisted her rings nervously.

"I never thought I had anything to learn from the condition of women," Louis said. "Then the rabbi talked to us about Sarah. How she couldn't get pregnant. Abraham made the concubines pregnant. Haggar the pretty Arab, he got her pregnant. But Sarah is like empty. Then God sees her despair and the angel comes and reports that she will have a son in her old age and she laughs. So the rabbi asked us this odd question. What kind of a laugh was it? I said Sarah laughed with joy. And somebody else said she laughed while crying tears of joy. And the rabbi said: maybe she laughed with bitter doubt. The way we laugh when Arafat says okay, now I mean it this time, this time I'm going to put all those bombers in jail.

"And I realized," Louis continued, "that I had been hearing people laugh just that way for my whole life, whenever I promised them something that I was not going to deliver. It made me feel really bad. But then I eventually felt good just from knowing myself better." Martha was beaming at him. She had forgotten her rings. "I feel very lucky," Louis concluded, "to learn something so important at my age, and I want to thank our rabbi."

The most brilliant guy in the class then got up and made a whole speech in Hebrew. My husband later told me that the Hebrew speaker basically said the same nice things that everybody else said about the rabbi. But mostly he was speaking in Hebrew to show that he didn't have as much to learn from Rabbi Geduldig as the other guys in the class, that he was smarter than they, that in fact, he was just as smart as the rabbi was.

Arrogant son-of-a-bitch, my husband said.

One by one they rose to say a this or a that. It was all pretty much the same. Heartfelt testimonials. This was my husband's. "My grandma used to tell us, as long as you have a good teacher, you always feel young. So I am feeling terrific these days, Rabbi, like a kid again, and I owe my new-found happiness to you."

That was what my husband said.

A lifetime I break my neck pretending that everything that man gives me is solid gold, and he says his happiness is new-found and he owes it all to Rabbi Geduldig.

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The dessert came, giving the rabbi and some of us wives too a little time to recover from the speeches. We turned our attention to Mrs. Geduldig.

"How many children do you have?" we asked her.

"Seven."

"Oh! And you still manage to work outside your home as well! You're really a superwoman!"

"I would give anything not to work," Mrs. Geduldig said. "Teaching bores me and exhausts me at the same time. But it's the only thing I can do, and obviously, we need the extra income. Besides, my dear husband, the progressive, believes that women should be liberated from the monotony of domestic life."

Her sarcasm penetrated like a wind. We shivered in the thin silk of our prosperity, and backed off.

The rabbi began to speak.

"The reason that teaching Torah must be a conversation," he said, "is that everyone intersects with revelation at a unique and different point. We are all particles of dust in a sunbeam swirling. We bump into each other by chance, then float away from each other, and it's okay, it's okay if we never bump into each other again as long we stay in the sunbeam.

"We have now read Genesis together. So let's think about our creation story. Was this the story of war, of conquest and kings? Was this a chronicle of epic battles among the forces of good and evil, each riding a demon steed, splitting the sky and the earth and the seas with blazing swords of lightening? Clearly not. Clearly our Genesis is a family drama. Brother against brother, fathers betrayed, wills and bequeathings. The men who wrote Genesis, inspired by God's power, cared more about fathers and sons than the military division of continents and seas. Surely this must be proof," our rabbi concluded, "that the People of the Book were meant to be primarily a *family* and to dance together in the sunbeams of the Torah."

Myself, I thought it was surely proof that the men who wrote Genesis must really have been some woman, sitting down at the opposite end of the table, and feeling such sympathy for her husband's desire to be important, to be one of the guys, to stay young, that she wrote the whole story of the Jews about *his* life, *his* needs, *his* dance and *his* revelation.

When my husband became ill and lay in the hospital bed, stuffed with tubes, at the gates of death, I in my desperation called Rabbi Geduldig.

It was a terribly hot Friday during the following summer. He had been gone from the JCC for some time, fired from his job as "Rabbi-in-Residence" because of the implacable dislike of most of the staff and the secret dislike—no one had recognized it except my husband—of the most brilliant guy in the class, the one who spoke in Hebrew at the class dinner.

At a JCC Board meeting, this man had suddenly attacked the rabbi. The rabbi's most ardent supporters happened to be absent that night. The retired manufacturer had died. The windshield wiper heir was attending a charity ball. The big

developer had gone south to buy a mall, I believe, or maybe he was selling it. Louis had taken Martha to the Caribbean for a vacation to celebrate their 35th wedding anniversary. My husband was, yet again, working late.

The most brilliant guy in the class told the Board that Rabbi Geduldig was a nice enough fellow but insufficiently scholarly. Our JCC needed someone famous for his erudition whom we could speak about with pride, he said—not a political dreamer who represented at most a tiny minority among the Orthodox. Couldn't we better spend our money elsewhere?

Before we knew it, a vote was taken and our rabbi was gone and new spiritual advisors were being interviewed for his job.

Could you come? I said to the rabbi's message machine. *Could you come to see my husband?*

Erev Shabbos, sweating, his red beard grayer and matted with the dust of the street, he arrived. Our kids were standing around the bed. The machines were clicking and buzzing. Before entering my husband's room, Rabbi Geduldig wiped his face and tried to straighten his tie. He spoke encouragingly to the children. He left prayers for us to read. He whispered into my husband's ear: *Everybody loves you, everybody wants you to get well, you have to be strong and get well because we all need you so much.* Then he whispered in Yiddish, then in Hebrew.

I paced in the hall outside, my married life ended, my memories like bombs dropping on the bright floor. He came and stood beside me, and I turned toward him, looking for the comfort of his sweet smile.

"It's the fucking money," he said, tears pouring into his beard. "The fucking money is gonna destroy us all." ■

Susan Dworkin co-authored, with Edith Hahn Beer, the holocaust memoir *The Nazi Officer's Wife* (Harper Collins), a documentary version of which appeared on A&E Network last year. Her novels include *The Book of Candy* and *Stolen Goods*. Her short fiction has appeared in *Ms. Magazine, Moment, The Bellevue Literary Review* and *The Berkshire Review.* She teaches writing at Tufts University.

Reviews

Summer Camp and Gender Roles

Campers spend more time with their counselors than with their parents.

It has been said that psychology is the study of the obvious, and sociology the study of the painfully obvious. ***How Goodly Are Thy Tents: Summer Camps as Jewish Socializing Experiences***, by **Amy L. Sales** and **Leonard Saxe** (Brandeis Series in American Jewish History, Culture and Life, Brandeis University Press/University Press of New England, $22), an ethnography of Jewish residential summer camps, part psychology, part sociology, doesn't say anything that isn't obvious to anyone who has attended one, or whose children have.

The book provides a general look at how Jewish sleep-away camps act as socializing experiences for children—an important subject given that, as the authors point out, some 83,000 children are served by these camps each summer. Sales and Saxe make two significant points. First, their research shows that "Campers spend more time with and have more access to their counselors at camp than they do with their parents at home." Second, they find that the more the camping staff is disengaged from or disrespectful of Jewish activities, the less likely campers are to be engaged or respectful.

Sales and Saxe are also right to point out that Jewish summer camps are key arenas where children experience both total Jewish living and major growing-up events. But the authors interviewed no children or adults about the impact camp had on them. (They claim it would have been too difficult to get parental permission to interview campers who are minors.) Instead, the sociologists observed campers from afar and spoke with camp staff and administrators for their data.

This is a huge problem for the credibility of the book's conclusions. The authors' sunny, brochure-language view of camp feels unfounded because they lack first-hand data from campers. I enjoyed camp myself, both as a camper and a counselor, but I never felt that "camp is suffused with positive emotional expression," as the authors describe it.

The real book that needs to be written is about the role of Jewish camps in socializing young Jews into heterosexual gender roles and sexual behaviors. Camp does not often offer a range of personal identity options. There, peer acceptance becomes immensely important, and adherence to traditional gender roles is an anchor toward acceptance. Girls try on "girl" behaviors and attitudes: shaving their legs and underarms, putting on makeup, dressing provocatively, and experimenting with boys. This begins around nine, 10 and 11 years of age. Boys are similarly introduced to masculinity in the form of bullying, being called "gay," the need to prove prowess in sports. My friend, a non-Jewish woman of Chinese descent from Potomac, MD, once told me, "I would never have learned anything about sex if not for my friends who went to Jewish sleep-away camp."

Jewish camp also presents its own problems with respect to gender. The participation of young women in prayer becomes an issue fraught with anxiety, or rather avoided altogether. The dynamics of prayer services and attendant gender-related behaviors and decisions that young men and women make deserve attention.

This book will be useful reading for those with no experience with the structural aspects of Jewish residential summer camping. It is not for those searching for a deeper, incisive look at what actually goes on with the kids.

—Sophie Danis Oberfield

Confessional Poetry

In ***Loosen the Fetters of Thy Tongue, Woman: The Poetry and Poetics of Yona Wallach*** (Hebrew Union College Press, $39.95), **Zafrira Lidovsky Cohen** wrestles with some of the most intricate and provocative poetry crafted in modern Hebrew. Yona Wallach (1944-1985) came of age as poetic revolutionaries of the 1950s and 1960s sought to create a more personal, informal poetry that utilized vernacular Hebrew and resonated with reality. In Cohen's account, Wallach was both part of that trend and not, departing from it by dipping into the visions, dreams, and fantasies of her own mind. This recognition of the unconscious both as a component of the self and an inspiration for poetry resulted in ground-breaking confessional poetry.

Characterized by "a blend of mysticism and madness," Wallach's poetry resists easy interpretation. Cohen takes a rigorous formalist approach to the oeuvre, meticulously decoding

the symbols and references dotting her poetic landscapes. Her attention to linguistic nuance reveals the ways in which Wallach subverts the structure of the Hebrew language. In a well-known poem entitled "Hebrew," for instance, Wallach declares that "Hebrew is a sex-maniac" because the gender distinction in the language reflects and reinforces the perceived sexist bias of Jewish society. Cohen, an associate professor of Hebrew at Stern College for Women, argues that Wallach's feminist project is to deconstruct male/female dichotomies and reconsider human identity.

Indeed, one of Wallach's crucial contributions is the uncompromising honesty with which she renders sexual power dynamics in such poems as her "When you come to sleep with me" series and "Tefilin." More daringly than any female Hebrew writer before her, Cohen suggests, "Wallach employs the erotic imagination as an explosive poetic tool not merely to confront women's realities but primarily to examine the ways in which the world can be truly different."

—Hannah Pressman

A New Novel About *Not* Becoming Your Mother

The bond between mothers and daughters forms the dark and pulsating heart of **Dani Shapiro's** gripping new novel, ***Family History*** (Alfred A. Knopf, $23). Rachel Jensen seems to have it all: wonderful, sexy husband, lovely and accomplished teen-aged daughter, fulfilling work as an art restorer, beautiful old house in a charming New England town. But when Rachel becomes pregnant with her second child, her daughter Kate suddenly starts behaving in a bizarre and disturbing way. And after the baby, Josh, is born, he suffers a terrible accident while in Kate's care. Rachel is thrust into an untenable conflict: how to continue loving the one child who has, intentionally or not, wounded the other.

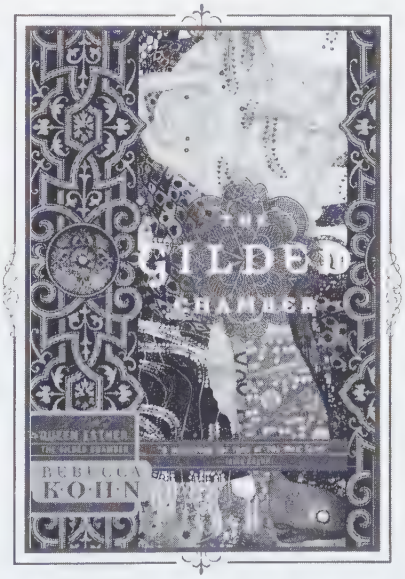
As the narrative unfolds, we are given glimpses of Rachel as a daughter as well as a parent. Her own mother, Phyllis, is both controlling and cold, and it Rachel's constant effort to be the kind of parent Phyllis never was. Among her many disservices, Phyllis seems to have deprived Rachel of her spiritual heritage, a loss that Rachel feels keenly. Walking on Manhattan's Upper West Side with Kate, she notices a synagogue she attended with her father as a young girl. "When I was ten or eleven," she recalls, "thanks to Phyllis's campaign for assimilation, I no longer thought it was cool to go to synagogue, and on Saturday mornings, I hung out with my friends instead. I was never bat mitzvahed, and I didn't go to Hebrew school. By the time I went to college, my father had given up on his spiritual side altogether. He played raquetball on Saturday mornings instead, his middle aged face twisted into a paroxysm of rage as he smashed the ball against the sides of the court again and again."

Yet when Josh is hurt, Phyllis warms up, and even reverts to Yiddish to express her love: "'Sweet kepeleh,' she murmured. When she straightened up again, she had tears in her eyes." As Rachel struggles to find her way back to Kate, there is the quiet but hopeful suggestion that perhaps she has made some incremental progress toward Phyllis as well.

—Yona Zeldis McDonough

ONE WOMAN, THE TWO MEN SHE LOVES, AND THE FATE OF OUR PEOPLE IN HER HANDS.

A NOVEL of QUEEN ESTHER



"A must-read for fans of *The Red Tent*."
— India Edghill, author of *Queenmaker: A Novel of King David's Queen*

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Short stories, dark and sharp

Edgy, dark, morbid, scathing, and, at moments, surreal. These are all apt descriptions of **Alix Straus's** new collection, ***The Joy of Funerals: A Novel in Stories*** (St. Martin's Press, $12.95). Each story, as the title suggests, deals with death: In one, a young widow who lusts after the men she meets in the cemetery (there is one whose yarmulke she filches); in another a woman's female lover is murdered by a stranger. Each story also shares a narrative voice that is hip, ironic, and knowing. After the widow burns the photographs of her husband, she "sprinkle[s] my husband onto my bowl of cereal. It looks like charcoal confectioner's sugar is smothering my Rice Krispies. I add milk, stir and eat." Another thirty-ish narrator tells herself to approach the evening's blind date: "with optimistic outlook of a woman awaiting execution."

The final and longest story in the collection weaves the rest of the stories together. Its narrator, Nina Perlman, is a troubled young woman who derives her greatest sense of meaning from attending the funerals of strangers, including those alluded to in the eight previous tales. It's an unusual gambit and not an altogether successful one, but the hiss, crackle and bite of Strauss's prose coupled with the taut energy of her narratives make this a debut collection a sharp and mordantly funny read. *—Y.Z.M.*

Hair Net

There was a time when decent women would never willingly appear in public without their heads covered. Until recently, it was a sign of a woman's standing. Even late into the 20th century, some private girls' schools mandated that students in uniform wear hats outside campus. The Torah tells of the woman caught in adultery who was brought to the high priest, who uncovered or disheveled her hair. It was a mark of shame to be seen publicly that way.

In ***Hide and Seek: Jewish Women and Hair Covering***, edited by **Lynne Schreiber** (Urim Publications, $24.95), 25 writers, including one husband, explore the controversial subject of Jewish women covering their hair after marriage. Not all Orthodox women who might have covered in the past do so now. The wife of renowned authority Rav J.B. Soleveichik, did not cover her hair, setting a far-reaching precedent.

The book raises questions: What is wrong with hair being seen? Why are married women seen differently than unmarried women? Why do some wear scarves or snoods, some hats, and some wigs? Why do some have hair showing and some have none? Each permutation comes with its own rationale, with groups of followers and rabbinic decisors offering opinions that seem more a matter of social mores than of modesty.

One bride writes of being color-identified for her first wig. "I felt I had been admitted to a new society, and this was my identifying number. I was a Jew, a woman, a lawyer and a kallah (bride), and now I was a four-six." Another woman, widowed in her thirties with seven children, is halachically obliged to cover her head for the rest of her life so that no potential husband can see her lovely red tresses, and eligible strangers assume she is unavailable. There are stories by wig makers, cancer sufferers, women who have stopped covering their hair altogether and those who have moved to the most stringent coverings.

This challenging and thought-provoking book gives sources both for covering and not covering. The jury seems to come down on the side of covering, especially in synagogue; but in Judaism, that is not necessarily significant to most adherents. *—Gael Hammer*

(continued on page 43)

Our Reviewers

Gael Hammer is a counselor, teacher and writer in Australia.

Sophie Danis Oberfield is a teacher and writer living in New York.

Hannah Pressman is working on her Ph.D. in Modern Hebrew Literature at New York University.

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from a new book...

Underground in Morocco

In January 2001, Gloria Becker Marchick returned from a Fulbright Lectureship in Morocco. She had unwillingly gone underground as a Jew during her several months there, intimidated by the tensions the most recent intifada had stirred up. The events of 9/11, however, changed all that.

September 13, 2001
Dear Mrs. Gloria:

I don't know what to say: I'm realy sorry for what happened yesterday to the american people, but what I, you or any body else can do. It's destined to happen at that time, in those places and to those innocent victims. Sorry again, me and every one in my family and those who believe that those victims are innocent and don t have any relation with what the american authority does in deffirent places in the world, present our condoleances to the american peole in general, and to the families of those who died in particular.

Believe me, I was realy afraid tat some thing terrible happen to u or to some of ur family God forbids;b/c I was at work when the attacks occurred, when somme body told us that the american states were attacked. I ve been assured only when I knew that the attacks were only in NY and Washington. It s true that the american authority is making errors by standing by the side of the Hebro state, but I m convinced that the american people is innocent from that, and I m sure that there r people who believe in peace and harmony in the world.

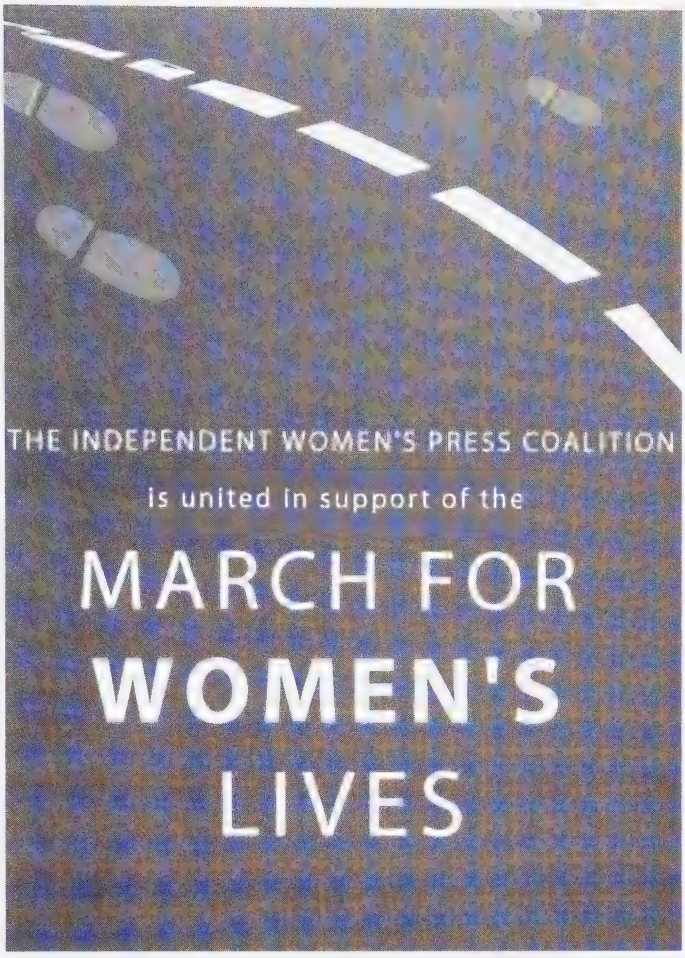
God Bless
Your faithful student Abun,
Sorry again. ill be waiting for your message.

The time had arrived when I must confess. I was in the safety of my home, my family and my country. I could not allow this attitude to go unnoticed or uncorrected. I sat down at my computer and composed the following letter. My Jewishness was subjugated to my American being and we were being victimized not because of being on the side of the "Hebro" state but because there were madmen who hated our power, our freedom and our democracy. They would not destroy us.

September 16, 2001
Abun, my dear student,

I received your e-mail telling me how you worried about my country and me. I so appreciated the time it took to write and the love that I read in your letter. We had a wonderful few months at the university studying US History and going on excursions with Brahim, Bahia, Drissa and the other students from our class. I will never forget those times.

Historical events happened while I was in your country and I witnessed yet another Intifada in the land the Palestinians and Israelis both claim as their own I watched Arab TV and then CNN and the BBC. The coverage of these



events was different and here was my problem—I had to resolve what the "truth" was.

I hope you comprehend the information in this letter because it is an important letter for me to write. I think it began when I applied for the Fulbright Lectureship that sent me to Morocco. I was so honored to receive this and then people asked why I had chosen Morocco. In case you don't recall this specific lecture, let me repeat that during World War II, the only three heads of state in the world to stand up to Hitler were King Carol of Denmark, King Bruno of Bulgaria, and King Mohammed V of Morocco. Hitler and the Vichy government demanded that the Moroccan Jews be delivered to him and your king defiantly replied, "I have no Jews. I have only Moroccan citizens." What amazing courage.

Because of this, I, as a Jew, decided to go to Morocco to teach and learn about this fascinating Islamic country that had allowed Jews to live and thrive during these terrible times. However, I did not have the prescience (foresight) to know that there would be an Intifada. I had no intention of hiding my Jewishness. The first four weeks I was in Morocco, I lived in Fes, went to the synagogue, and celebrated the Jewish New Year with the students and staff at the Arabic Language School.

But then, the Intifada broke out and my Arabic friends at the school told me not to broadcast my Jewishness. Now, what did that mean? It meant that I could not go to the synagogue in Tanger. It meant that when you asked me if I were a Muslim, I could not answer, "I am Jewish," but instead, merely said, "No, I am not a Muslim. Je suis croyante."

Luckily, no one ever said, "What religion are you?" because I do not think I could have lied directly to your face. This was painful for me.

I watched the protests. I watched the killings on TV. I listened to students tell me that they would go to Israel and be suicide bombers. I listened to the noon news in Arabic in the taxis. I cried. I worried. I cried some more. The history class you were part of was a wonderful class. I tried to tell you what America is. I wanted you to see that in America, while it is not perfect, Jews, Christians and Muslims live in the same neighborhoods. My daughter Patti's best friend Hannan is the daughter of a Palestinian named Al Nadar. It is not perfect here but we do live in a peace, a false peace perhaps, but peace.

So now our bubble has been shattered by the crash of four hijacked airplanes. Thousands of lives have been destroyed and the amount of money and property lost is incalculable. Today, no one knows what tomorrow will bring except we know it will not be good. We know there will be no peace. The attack was the act of evil people who do not speak for Islam. The attack was committed by people who believe that killing wins a war.

...The flames you saw on the TV were flames of rage but they will never destroy the beauty of our American dream that allows all of us, no matter how different we are, to live together and all of us to feel like Americans.

I hope you understand that this letter is to help you see me as I really am and know that no matter what, I treasure your friendship and the love you and your family showed me when I was a guest in your country. Even though I came to you as a teacher, it was I who was the student.

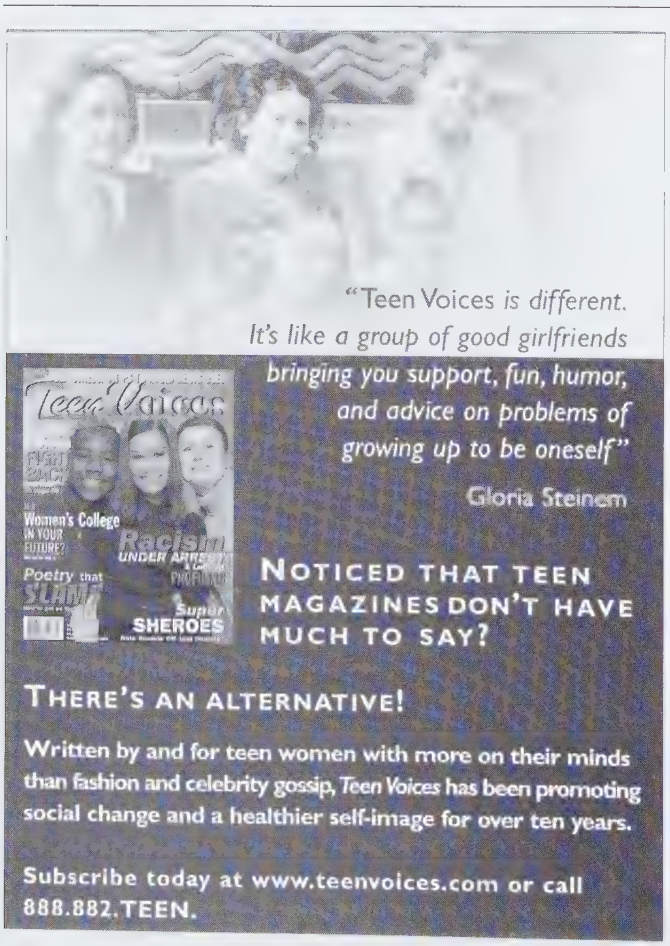
Thank you for sharing your country, your life and your family with me.

Salaam and Shalom.

Fondly, Gloria

The letter was written and I had "come out." Yet I felt no great relief. It was just another e-mail. Maybe I felt confident that Ismael and my other friends would never hear from Abun because professors and students don't mix as I did. They barely exchange greetings outside of class. In subsequent e-mails Abun responded with a new line. He now loved Jews and the "Hebro" people. Every letter was signed with Salaam and Shalom. I would never again hear how he truly felt and this was all right.

Excerpted with permission from *Shalom in My Heart Salaam on My Lips: A Jewish Woman in Modern Morocco* by Gloria Becker Marchick. (Micah Publications, 2003, www.micahbooks.com)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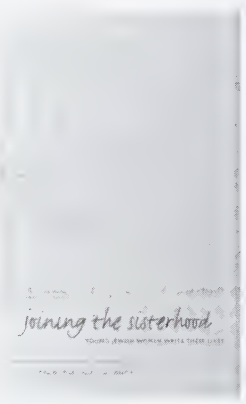
(continued from page 40)

Sisterhood Is Powerful

In *Joining the Sisterhood: Young Jewish Women Write Their Lives* (State University of New York Press, $18.95), editors **Tobin Belzer** and **Julie Pelc** open the floor to young Jewish women, ranging from their late teens to early thirties, ranging from secular to Orthodox; lesbian, bisexual, and heterosexual; women of color, poets, students, novelists, educators and professors. This is the generation who grew up knowing that women could be rabbis, that Orthodox women could be feminists, that Jewish women could be not only teachers but also doctors, and that bat mitzvah ceremonies were a given and not an anomaly. Write Belzer and Pelc, "Today, there are young Jewish women who engage in almost every aspect of religious and cultural Jewish life." They also claim that "our unique perspectives have remained largely invisible."

In this collection, Belzer and Pelc mix the zesty sounds of terrifically diverse voices. Meet Leah Berger. She stands as a feminist, a bisexual, an environmentalist, an abuse survivor and a Jew. Putting labels aside, she takes her quest for identity to the deserts of Tucson and, ultimately, to the redwood forests of California where she prays on Tisha B'av, a day commemorating "acts of discrimination and destruction toward our people throughout our collective history." Meet Loolwa Khazzoom, born and bred as a practicing Orthodox Jew in the context of a biracial, Mizrahi Jewish family. Her essay unfolds the resolutions she must reach with her North African roots, no matter what her family thinks, and the veins of feminism and Judaism that affirm her sense of self. In Leanne Leiberman's essay "God Lives in the Himalayas," the author studies Buddhism in Thailand, Israeli history in a liberal Orthodox yeshiva in Jerusalem, and reconciles her non-Jewish boyfriend with her family. And Julie Pelc tells how, after a debilitating injury, she unearths the healing spiritual power of dance as her essay begins, "On Tuesday night, I go dancing with God."



The pieces in this anthology swell with passion, learning, and struggle as this cohort of very different women strut, step, and stomp into new identities and experiences. Eye-opening and vivacious, the essays and poems of *Joining the Sisterhood* are a testament to both feminist and Jewish values.

—*Ilana Kramer*

Caren Loebel-Fried

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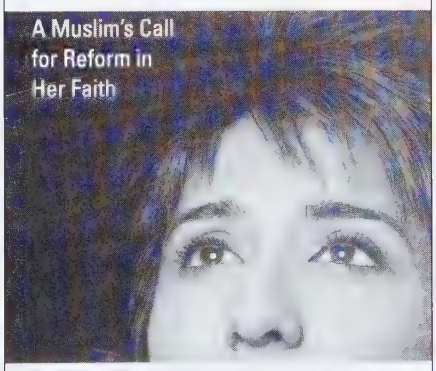
"[Irshad Manji] is Osama Bin Laden's worst nightmare."
—*The New York Times*



THE TROUBLE WITH ISLAM
Irshad Manji

A provocative and deeply personal challenge to the contradictions of Islam today—and an urgent call to reform.

NEW IN HARDCOVER St. Martin's Press

PICK UP THE PHONE

Telephone visiting. It's an easy act of kindness. Make a telephone call to reassure, check in, chat for a few minutes with an elderly relative, a neighbor who's sick, a disabled family member, colleague—or even a stranger. A recent training session for volunteers sponsored by the Rabbi Isaac N. Trainin Bikur Cholim Coordinating Council, at the Jewish Board of Family and Children's Services, offered suggestions both for the individual caller and for anyone who wants to organize a group of callers. Contact *Vicki Rosenstreich, CSW (212)399-2685x229; www.jhhrn.org*

Telephone support for caregivers is available to people caring long distance, those caring for elders while caring for children, and for lesbian and gay caregivers. *Dorot: Generations Helping Generations, toll-free (877)819-9147.*

HEALING

Young Mothers Fight Breast Cancer. How do children cope during a mother's diagnosis, treatment and post-treatment? Sharsheret, an organization of young Jewish women with breast cancer, has has developed "Busy Box Project," to help women meet the needs of their children. Games and activities for children are included along with a video of a symposium that discusses the obstacles parents face in communicating with their children about breast cancer. Contact: *Elana Silber (866)474-2774; www.sharsheret.org*

AFTER THE HOLOCAUST

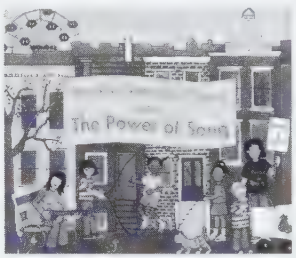
Life in Shadows: Hidden Children and the Holocaust. Thousands of Jewish children survived the brutal carnage of World War II, many of them in hiding. With identities disguised, often physically concealed from the outside world, these youngsters lived in constant fear and danger. A careless remark could lead to discovery and death. A new exhibit explores the remarkable history of children who went—or were sent—underground to escape Nazi persecution. Through September 30 at the *United States Holocaust Memorial and Museum in Washington DC. www.ushmm.org*

***Women's* Holocaust Experiences**. The Frances and Kathryn Brandt and LILITH Magazine Women's Holocaust Memoir Collection is growing. At the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, this continuing project already has several hundred volumes of memoirs, analysis and history. It is made possible through the generosity of Lilith board member Frances Brandt. *www.lib.umich.edu/area/Near.East/judaica.html*

The C.A.N.D.L.E.S. Holocaust Museum (for Children of Auschwitz Nazi Deadly Lab Experiments Survivors) in Terre Haute, Indiana, was burned down by arson in November 2003 and needs funds to rebuild. Founded by Eva Kor in 1995, it tells the story of the children who survived and educates the public about the experiments twins were forced to endure. The slogan of the Museum is "Let us remove hatred and prejudice from the world and let it begin with me." *www.candles-museum.com*

PLEASURE, PLUS GOOD DEEDS

The Power of Song is a first CD released by The Brooklyn Women's Chorus, singing together weekly for five years. Founded by social activist and singer-songwriter Bev Grand in 1997, they say their goal is "to change the world, one shaky voice at a time." The women—of all ages and



diverse ethnic backgrounds and walks of life—sing of peace and justice, freedom and struggle. You can listen to an excerpt and purchase it for $15 from *www.CDBaby.com*

Sabon (soap in Hebrew) is a new shop in Manhattan's West Village (434 6th Ave at 10th St.) that sells soaps, candles, lotions, Dead Sea salts, and other necessary indulgences—all from Israel. With ten shops in Israel, this is their first in New York City. *www.sabonnyc.com*

Take a Mezuzah to College. Here's an activity for high school seniors: making their own personal mezuzah to take with them next fall. One of many suggestions for *hiddur mitzvah*, the beautification of mitzvot from the Gary Rosenthal Collection. There's a kit with all the makings, including colored glass from *www.collectgaryrosenthal.com 800-962-1545.*

IN MEMORY OF

Helping young activists. The Amy Adina Schulman Memorial Fund helps young people who want to be of service to others. Started in 1987 to commemorate the brief but vibrant life of an activist in the progressive Zionist youth movement who died suddenly from an aneurysm while a college junior. This fund has so far distributed over $168,800 to 286 grantees. For guidelines: *www.AmyAdinaSchulmanFund.org*

When a Jewish child dies. After the death of his daughter Rebecca at age 23, social worker Mort Schrag wrote "Walk Through the Valley of the Shadow." It aims to help other families who are bewildered, overwhelmed and devastated by such losses, offering resources and thoughtful advice. "Try hard to believe that life really is worth living—whether your rationale be to perpetuate your child's memory: or to resume accomplishing the goals you previously had set for yourself; or to strive toward entirely new goals; or to try to find the answers to the age-old question of "Why?" The free pamphlet is available from *Mort Schrag, 2054 Manning Ave, Los Angeles, CA 90025; sabamortla@aol.com*

WOMEN MAKING HISTORY

1000 Women for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2005. Who are the largely unheralded women making peace in the world today? In the 102 years of the Nobel Peace Prize only 11 women have been acknowledged by the committee for their peace work. Here's how to right this. Help find 1000 women all over the world working for peace in their countries, communities and neighborhoods. Having a thousand women recognized at one time will more than even up the score. It will focus attention on the strategies women utilize and the obstacles they face in transforming conflicts. It will celebrate the courage, creativity and power of women as they respond to poverty, inequity, militarization and armed conflict. And perhaps the recognition will bring women's peace work from the informal into the formal sphere and strengthen their influence on the official actors. *www.1000peacewomen.org*

LILITH Magazine's Lens on Jewish History, a timeline poster highlighting the contributions of women is now free from LILITH. Send $5 for shipping & handling, and ask for up to ten posters which will arrive in a mailing tube. *LILITH, 250 W. 57th Street, #2432, New York, NY 10107. www.lilthmag.com*

"Women, War, and Peace in Jewish and Middle East Contexts" is the theme of Volume 6 of *Nashim: A Journal of Jewish Women's Studies & Gender Issues.* Guest edited by Alice Shalvi, it includes personal essays by Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert, Galia Golan, Clare Kinberg, Sylvia Fogiel-Bijaoui, Laura Levitt, Rela Mazali, Shulamit Reinharz, Erella Shadmi, Marla Brettschneider, Malka Engker and Judith Stern Peck. Of special interest: Margalit Shilo's "Women as Victims of War: the British Conquest (1917) and the Blight of Prostitution in the Holy City," and Sachlav Stoller-Liss's "'Mothers Birth the Nation': The Social Construction of Zionist Motherhood in Wartime in Israeli Parent's Manuals." Subscription information for *Nashim: (800)842-6796 x 9449 or rdussen@indiana.edu*

—compiled by Naomi Danis

THROUGH WOMEN"S EYES

Cholent: Selected Images by Malcah Zeldis spotlights the self-taught folk artist first featured in Lilith in 1970s. This exhibit gives a sampling of works

produced over a long and maturing career, from paintings of real people such Marilyn Monroe and Clark Gable to sports figures and Bible characters and meaningful places and events in the artists own life. Through March 28 at the *Marcus Jewish Community Center of Atlanta, 5342 Tilly Mill Road, Dunwoody, GA.*

Focus on the Soul. Lotte Jacobi (1896-1990) began her career as a fourth generation photographer in Berlin and documented theatrical productions in Weimar Germany, as well as rarely photographed scenes of Soviet Russia and Central Asia in the 1930s. She eventually spent decades in the United States, where she experimented with abstract pictures made in the darkroom without a camera, and captured Lotte Lenya, Albert Einstein, Robert Frost, Marc Chagall among others in now-famous

Lotte Lenya, 1928. © Lotte Jacobi Archives, Photographic Services and Special Collections, University of New Hampshire.

portraits. This exhibit, created at the Currier Museum in Manchester NH, can be seen through April 11 at the *Jewish Museum*—now celebrating it's centennial year. *1109 Fifth Ave. New York, NY; (212)423-3271; www.thejm.org*

Yerushe/Inheritance: Assemblages by artist Tsirl Waletzky, offers new work

by the artist known for her papercuts created for Lilith and many other Jewish feminist projects. She is also the subject of a video made by her son, Josh Waletzky, which is part of this exhibit. Through May 2 at the *Yeshiva University Museum, 15 West 16th St., New York, NY. www.yumuseum.org*

The Philistines Are Coming. Margalit Manor photographed a series of iron silhouettes for an exhibition on Philistine life at the Corine Maman Ashdod Museum in Israel—one of the five seats of government for the ancient Philistine people. Recent archaeology has revealed that the Philistines—the people of Delilah as well as Goliath—developed a highly creative culture, with art of great stature. Through May 19, at the *Yeshiva University Museum, 15 West 16th St., New York, NY. www.yumuseum.org*

Theatrical Realism. California painter and printmaker **Inez Storer** learned the

details of her German Jewish past only as an adult. In her art she addresses themes of identity, spirituality, imagination and history. 30 paintings are on view through June 27 at the *National Museum of American Jewish History in Philadelphia, (215)923-3811; www.nmajh.org*

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One Woman's Tenement Is Another's Castle

by Letty Cottin Pogrebin

PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE LOWER EAST SIDE TENEMENT MUSEUM

Lower East Side Tenement Museum 91 Orchard Street.

I'm a big fan of the Tenement Museum on the Lower East Side which has preserved or lovingly restored several apartments occupied during the first decades of the 20th Century. The Tenement Museum evokes my immigrant mother's early life in New York, the stories she told about the years when she lived with her parents and six siblings in three rooms and they slept head to foot in a bed and shared a toilet in the hall with 20 or more of their neighbors. This was where she began to create her American dream. Walking through these ill-lit rooms, with their tattered furnishings, their rickety cradles and heavy black flat irons, the icebox and the foot-pedaled sewing machine, the faded wallpaper and rutted floors, I felt my roots so intensely that I could almost hear my mother's voice saying the blessing over the shabbos candles. I became acutely aware of the impacted, cramped reality of her daily life, her lack of privacy, her poverty, and the fact that a baby might be born on one side of a room while ten feet away someone was dying.

My husband and I chose to celebrate our 35th anniversary by renting the Tenement Museum for an evening and inviting our extended family to bring photographs and mementos and come reminisce about their roots on the Lower East Side. The museum's director, Ruth Abram, escorted us on a guided tour after which we convened for a meal typical of the Jewish immigrant period, served in the Tenement kitchen on mismatched tables with similarly time-worn chairs that accommodated 24 of us. Not only was the event celebratory and unique, but it introduced our children to the history they only knew from pictures and stories—it was as if the Tenement Museum was the museum of our own family.

Letty Cottin Pogrebin, a founding editor of *Ms.* magazine, is the author of nine books, including her memoir of reconciling Judaism and feminism, *Deborah, Golda, and Me* and her first novel, *Three Daughters*. She is also a past president of the Authors Guild.

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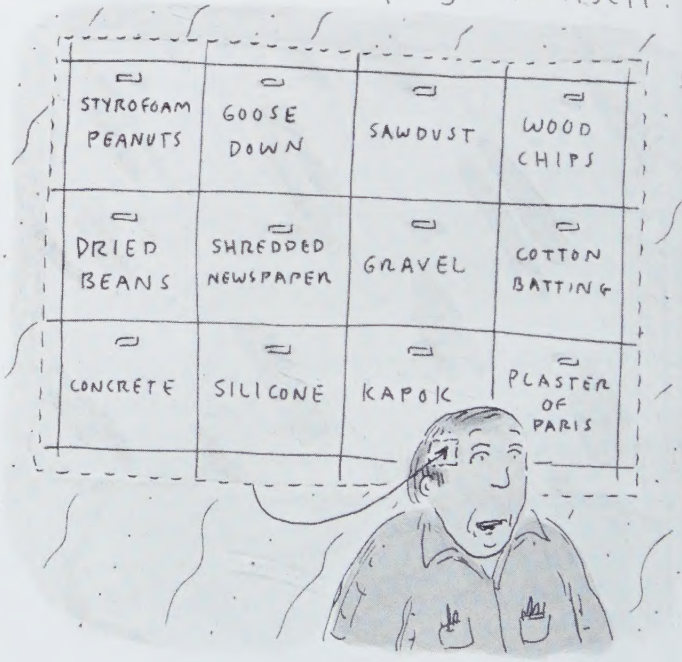
INSIDE ONE'S MEMORY BANK

By the time you're forty, all available drawers are completely filled.

People think they can get around this by cramming stuff into already-in-use drawers, but they're sadly mistaken.

You learn something new, something else gets thrown out.

And in the end everything turns into material whose only function is to keep one's head from collapsing in on itself.



Roz Chast was born in Brooklyn, New York. Her cartoons began appearing the *New Yorker* in 1978. Since then, she has published over 600 cartoons in the magazine. She has published several collections of her cartoons, and has illustrated four children's books.

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